

**The Shakespearean Lens:
A Filmic Pedagogy of Shakespeare**

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The use of Shakespeare on film as a resource in secondary school Shakespeare courses has become so prevalent that, as Susan Leach puts it, ““seeing the video” has become equated with “doing” the book’. Despite its great use-value as a conveniently accessible form of Shakespeare in performance, it is my contention that the Shakespearean film, whether it be a ‘classical’ adaptation like those of Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh or an appropriation of the Shakespearean text like Al Pacino’s Looking for Richard or the Oscar-winning Shakespeare in Love, offers much more to students and teachers of Shakespeare than its ability to allow students to see and hear the play in its ‘true’ form as a performance.

This thesis begins with an examination of the pedagogical and curricular contexts in which Shakespeare has been and continues to be deployed in New Zealand. The following chapters explore the potential for using Shakespeare on film in the service of various educational agendas: the New Zealand secondary-level English curriculum, as outlined in English in the New Zealand Curriculum, particularly its emphasis on response to text and reading visual language; the long tradition of the study of the works of Shakespeare in this country and throughout the world; and the diverse and ever-expanding fields of literary and critical theory and cultural studies.

The most promising space for cultural intervention remains, despite systematic attacks on the system, that of education; where film and television productions can be introduced into literature courses, posing fundamental cultural questions, liberating radical possibilities of meaning and contributing to the much needed politicisation of the 'Shakespeare' institution.

Graham Holderness (Shaughnessy, 81)

We might ... think of abandoning one of the original, founding notions of the subject: that it should consist of the steadfast, non-theoretical contemplation of self-evidently 'great' works of literary art, undertaken in the belief that this will make us, in some unspecified way, better human beings. A slight shift of focus brings into view a much more rewarding pursuit. This would involve us in confronting, not the 'great' works of art in themselves ... but the ways in which these works have been processed, generated, presented, worked up, in our own time and previously, as part of the struggle for cultural meaning In this form, 'English' would consist, not of a supposedly innocent encounter with literary texts, but of an analysis of the ways in which the meanings of those texts have been produced and used: the study of how readings of them arise, operate, conflict and clash, of the social and political positions which they embody and on behalf of which they function.

Terence Hawkes (That Shakespeherian Rag, 123)

Shakespearean texts have only uses, not inherent meanings and functions.

John Frow (Mead and Campbell, 216)

Contents

Abstractii

Acknowledgmentsv

Introduction: ‘But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading’:

 Shakespeare in New Zealand1

1. Shakespeare, English in the New Zealand Curriculum, and the
 University Entrance and Bursaries Examination11

2. Negotiating the Language Strands: Shakespeare on Page, Stage, and Screen ...60

3. The Case for Visual Language: Shakespeare’s Comedies on Film94

4. Response to Text, Reader-Response Criticism, and the Question of Adaptation:
 Shakespeare’s Hamlet on Film129

5. ‘She turned to folly, and she was a whore’: Shakespeare, Feminist Criticism, and
 Film178

6. ‘A Shakespeare for the People’: Shakespeare in Love and Michael
 Hoffman’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream216

7. Intertextuality and Subcultures: Baz Luhrmann’s
 William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet 265

Conclusion: The Shakespearean Lens296

Appendix302

Works Consulted315

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But most of all, this is for Pete.

Introduction

‘But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading’:

Shakespeare in New Zealand

When Polonius asks Hamlet ‘What do you read, my lord?’ during the scene in Shakespeare’s Hamlet from which the quotation in the title of this introduction is taken, the prince replies: ‘Words, words, words’ (2.2.191-2). Put the same question to a secondary school student in New Zealand at any time during the last century or so, and the response might well be: ‘Shakespeare, Shakespeare, Shakespeare’. William Shakespeare occupies a singular position within English courses in New Zealand. He is the only author whose works are specified for compulsory study and examination by the University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships English prescription, which states that in Section C of the University Entrance and Bursaries examination, ‘Candidates will be required to answer a question on a Shakespearian play, to be chosen from a list of five. Questions will be set on each play, requiring candidates to write an essay in response to either an extract or a topic’. The Shakespeare question is worth 20 per cent of the paper. English is currently the most popular Bursary subject, being undertaken by around 15, 000 candidates each year (Houlahan, unpublished paper), and, moreover, the weight afforded to Shakespeare by the Bursary prescription has meant, in practice, that in the majority of secondary schools throughout New Zealand Shakespeare is taught not only to students of Bursary English, but to students at other levels as well.¹ Shakespeare’s prescribed centrality to the teaching

and learning of English in Aotearoa is a point on which English in the New Zealand Curriculum, the latest curriculum statement for English released in 1994, makes no comment whatsoever, but it begs a number of questions which should not go unexamined by teachers and students of Shakespeare in this country: as Michael Neill suggests, ‘Shakespeare [retains] an apparently disproportionate prominence in our curriculum’ (131). The compulsory inclusion of Shakespeare seems to me to raise at least three important concerns: why have the works of Shakespeare been afforded so unrivalled a position in English teaching in New Zealand, why must that position be safeguarded by means of compulsion, and what implications do Shakespeare’s singularity and his compulsory status carry for the teaching and examination of his works in this country? The goal of my thesis is not to condemn the ways in which Shakespeare is taught in New Zealand, nor to suggest that his works should no longer be taught, but rather to interrogate the historical and ideological significance of Shakespeare in this country in order to reach a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of why and how we study, teach, and examine his works.²

In ‘Shakespeare Upside Down,’ Michael Neill argues that ‘the value we ascribe to major literary texts is at least as much a function of their historical significance as it is of their aesthetic power. Indeed those two things may sometimes be almost impossible to disentangle’ (139), and such an assertion must lead us to ask what it is that constitutes the historical significance of Shakespeare in Aotearoa. Neill writes that ‘[Shakespeare] has been involved with our antipodean history from its very beginnings’ (127). This assertion arises in part from the fact that a copy of the collected works of Shakespeare was one of a select number of books in Captain Cook’s library on the Endeavour when that ship first made landfall in New Zealand in

1769, but more particularly from the wider implications of its inclusion along with a collection of predominantly technical and scientific texts, in that Shakespeare ‘had become literature; [his writing] travelled ... as a prestigious written text and one that could be regarded essential baggage: part of an educated man’s apparatus for understanding the world, and an important talisman of the superior English culture of which he was the emissary’ (129). In an article entitled ‘Reluctant Campers?’, John Geraets employs the image of pitching a tent in a discussion of New Zealand’s literary culture: ‘the image I have in mind is of pitching a tent; we “pitch” tents, temporary dwellings but generally on someone else’s land, implicitly at least on someone else’s terms’ (69). While Geraets’s metaphor is designed to refer specifically to ‘New Zealand writers writing in New Zealand about New Zealand’ (72), we may borrow his metaphor and adapt it in order to discuss the new cultural identity which began to evolve as the first British settlers established themselves in New Zealand. The first colonists who pitched their tents on ‘someone else’s land’ undoubtedly used the tent-poles that they had brought with them from the mother country: the Bible and The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, the artefacts of English religion and culture.

If we allow that Shakespeare provided an essential prop for the nascent culture of colonial New Zealand, representing, as noted above, the inherent attributes of the superior English culture of the colonisers, we must also acknowledge Shakespeare’s deployment as a vehicle for empire-building and for the perpetuation of the ideology of the imperial power, which has been widely discussed by commentators throughout the former colonies. Neill observes that ‘the universalism implicit in [Ben Jonson’s] claim that Shakespeare “was not for an age but for all time” [became] one of the most

insistent and effective themes of acculturation wherever British power sought to implant itself" (128), and evidence of this perceived universalism is apparent in a passage of verse by William Pember Reeves called 'The Dream Imperial', which was written for A Book of Homage to Shakespeare, published in 1916 to commemorate the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. Reeves enlists Shakespeare as a justification for Empire and as a tool for empire-building:

A soul supreme, seen once and not again,
 Spoke in a little island of great men
 When first our cabin'd race drew ampler breath
 And won the sea for wise Elizabeth, --
 Spoke with a sound and swell of waters wide
 To young adventure in a May of pride,
 Told of our fathers' deeds in lines that ring
 And showed their fame no scant or paltry thing.
 Then as our warring, trading, reading race
 Moved surely outward to imperial space,
 Beyond the tropics to the ice-blink's hem
 The mind of Shakespeare voyaged forth with them.
 They bore his universe of tears and mirth
 In battered sea-chests to the ends of earth,
 So that in many a brown, mishandled tome,
 -- Compacted spirit of the ancient home, --
 He who for man the human chart unfurled
 Explored eight oceans and possessed the world.

Children of England's children, breed new-prized,
 Building the greater State scarce realized,
 Sons of her sons who, unreturning, yet
 Looked o'er the sundering wave with long regret,
 Grandsons on clear and golden coasts, how seems

The grey, ancestral isle beheld in dreams?

‘We have a vision of our fathers’ land,’
 ‘The realm of England drawn by Shakespeare’s hand,’
 ‘The lordly isle beyond the narrow sea
 ‘Fronting the might of war light-heartedly;’
 ‘Her history his shining pageant set’
 ‘With stately Tudor and Plantagenet;’
 ‘Her magic woods, dim Arden cool and green;’
 ‘The imperial votaress her maiden-queen’
 ‘Throned in a kingdom brave and sweet and old.’
 ‘This is the England that we have and hold,’
 ‘His dream majestic borne to shores afar,’
 -- ‘Old England, kind in peace and fierce in war,’
 ‘The dream that lives where e’er his English rove’
 ‘The land he left for lands unknown to love!’

(Gollancz, 312-13)

A revised version of this poem was also published separately by Reeves in The Passing of the Forest (1925), and there are some significant differences in the opening lines of this later publication:

Through him the soul of England spoke to men,
 Soul of an island people pent till then,
 When first our cabin’d race drew ampler breath
 And won the sea for wise Elizabeth ...
 Then as our roving, trading, reading race
 Moved onward, sea-borne to imperial space ...
 The outward-bound magician sailed with them....

(cited in Yarwood, 13)

The earlier version of this poem was written in the context of the First World War, and the Book of Homage was almost certainly conceived of at least in part as a means of bolstering support for the war effort.³ (Interestingly, Laurence Olivier would later enlist Shakespeare in a similar struggle when he made a film of Henry V in 1944). Thus Reeves's account of the early colonists' move to New Zealand is couched in strong and determined language: they are a 'warring' people who '[m]oved surely outward to imperial space'. In the 1925 revision, Reeves's description of the colonial project becomes even more insidious. Whereas the 1916 reference to the 'warring' English at least acknowledged the violence which characterised the first decades of New Zealand's colonial history, the colonists become in 1925 a 'roving, trading, reading race'. In both cases, the English are characterised as readers, and moreover Reeves's construction implies that warring, roving, trading, and reading are activities entirely coherent with each other. This innocuous-sounding group 'moved onward, sea-borne to imperial space', as though it were the pull of the tides which brought them inevitably to be a civilising force in Aotearoa, and not a conscious act of imperial expansion and domination.

In the 1916 version of 'The Dream Imperial', Reeves enlists Shakespeare in the wider service of the war effort against Germany: he is '[a] soul supreme', and therefore he stands for all. But the 1925 version of the poem can afford to be much more specific: that 'soul supreme' is in fact '[t]he soul of England'. The second part of the 1916 poem (which is more like its 1925 counterpart than the first stanza) sets out quite clearly what it is that constitutes the colonial project. The '[c]hildren of England's children', who are a 'breed new-prized', perhaps because of their contribution to the war effort, are engaged in '[b]uilding the greater State scarce

realized', and the blueprints of this great state are very specific: they are '[t]he realm of England drawn by Shakespeare's hand'. For Reeves, the project of colonialism, or the apparently harmless inhabitation of 'imperial space', can be summarised as Shakespeare's 'dream majestic'. The early New Zealand colonists looked to Shakespeare as the embodiment all that was noble, worthy, timeless, and English – what Reeves calls 'the soul of England'. When they pitched the tent of cultural identity on someone else's land, it was Shakespeare who guaranteed that the structure would be supported by values and attributes which were essentially and unquestionably English.

Throughout the century and a half following the first British colonists' arrival in New Zealand and establishment of a satellite English culture in their new land, Shakespeare continued to function powerfully as a cultural metaphor and a vehicle for the transmission of colonial values within New Zealand society. Neill argues that '[t]he long and complicated history of Shakespeare's entanglement with empire has meant that ... he has become (among other things) *a New Zealand dramatist* Shakespeare has been not merely part of our history, but ... part of the cultural equipment by which we have learned to know that history and our place in it' (139, 129, Neill's italics). This suggests that he came less to represent something identifiable as 'Englishness' or the embodiment of an imported culture, than to be recognisable as an intrinsic component of the cultural identity of New Zealand as a (former) colony and a nation in its own right. However, even as the token of English imperial culture became a 'New Zealand dramatist', Shakespeare's ideological power continued to be problematic. In 'Shakespeare and the Kiwi,' Frank Sargeson writes

that 'Shakespeare [possessed] powers attaching to his name which were as mysterious as they were undefined' (113), and describes

the one volume copy [of the complete works of Shakespeare] printed in double columns which used to be a common object in many New Zealand homes At a time when the supremacy of the printed word was yet to be challenged by films and radio, Shakespeare (or so it seems to me now), was believed by many New Zealanders to be the man ... who had come closest to writing a book which might challenge the supremacy of the family Bible.

(113)

Sargeson's comments betray a tendency in New Zealand society to assign to Shakespeare a quasi-mystical power and to regard his works, significantly in their written form, as a source of wisdom and truth of biblical proportions, recalling Reeves's description of the 'brown, mishandled tome, / -- Compacted spirit of the ancient home' (ll. 15-16). Such a position continues to exert a measure of influence on the teaching and learning of Shakespeare in New Zealand.

An assertion by Charles Brasch in the March 1964 edition of Landfall, celebrating Shakespeare's four hundredth birthday, similarly attributes to Shakespeare's poetry a spiritual quality and power:

To see [Shakespeare's] work and its power from this country is to perceive them as active in this country. If the work has had little effect here yet, at least poetry has shown its presence in New Zealand. How could it not do so, in a country whose language is English and some of whose children absorb unconsciously the great weight and range and richness of English? And the English language is unthinkable without Shakespeare, without poetry To honour [Shakespeare] is to honour poetry and the English language. None of this great trinity is held in

much esteem among us. But we shall not grow as a people, in any sense that matters, unless by its light.

(Brasch, 4)

Brasch's comments suggest that Shakespeare is essential to New Zealand's cultural development, and his reference to the children of New Zealand reminds us that one of the means by which Shakespeare became 'a New Zealand dramatist', as Neill asserts, is by his inculcation in the educational institutions of this country – what Neill calls 'the institutionalized propagation of Shakespeare in the South Pacific' (127). In Chapter One I will discuss the history and development of English in the New Zealand Curriculum and address some of the reasons behind and the arguments in favour of Shakespeare's compulsory status in English courses in New Zealand.

¹ Some schools introduce Shakespeare at Year 9 and teach it at all levels, while others begin teaching Shakespeare at Year 11 or 12.

² At the time of writing, the secondary level examination system is undergoing widespread reform. According to the NCEA Level 3 guidelines, gazetted in 2001, Shakespeare will continue to be a compulsory author as part of Year 13 English courses.

³ Coppélia Kahn has observed that the publication of A Book of Homage to Shakespeare coincided with a shift in the tide of opinion regarding the war, from support to growing disillusionment ('Imperial Shakespeare: The 1916 Tercentenary.' Paper delivered at Dislocating Shakespeare, the Biennial Conference of the Australia New Zealand Shakespeare Association, 8 July 2000).

Chapter 1

Shakespeare, English in the New Zealand Curriculum, and the University

Entrance and Bursaries Examination

[A]n undeniable barrier ... stands between the play and an audience that has had the all-too-common experience of being forcibly fed with Shakespeare at school. In New Zealand, I am afraid, this is an almost universal reaction.

(Dame Ngaio Marsh, 'The Audience', typescript page 3)

The English curriculum in New Zealand has undergone an extensive period of reform and development. The period of reform dates from the formation of the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) in 1969, just five years after Brasch published in Landfall his bardolatrous remarks about Shakespeare's place in the colonies, until the publication of English in the New Zealand Curriculum in 1994. The catalyst for this period of reform was the broadly influential Dartmouth Conference of 1966, which recommended sweeping changes to English teaching around the world, including more emphasis on creative writing and other creative uses of language, greater utilisation of audio-visual media, and the inclusion of oral and listening skills alongside those of reading and writing, as well as changes to classroom practice which would serve to put the learner closer to the centre of the learning and teaching experience. However, the twenty-five years of curriculum development that

ultimately produced English in the New Zealand Curriculum saw a move further and further away from the objectives of the original reforms proposed by the NESC in 1969, as Graham Stoop argues in a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the various stages of the reform process. In this chapter I will give a brief account of the educational climate that produced English in the New Zealand Curriculum, considering the effects of the movement away from the proposals of Dartmouth on the study of literature, and, in particular, the implications that this document's position on literature carries for the study of Shakespeare. I will also discuss English in the New Zealand Curriculum's emphasis on the audio-visual media and its account of language as comprising not just written texts, but oral and visual texts as well.

In December 1994, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand released English in the New Zealand Curriculum, which replaced Language in the Primary School: English (1961) and English Forms 3-5: Statement of Aims (1983), and included the first official senior syllabus document in the history of English teaching in this country. It represented part of the National Government's Achievement Initiative scheme, which called for a review and redevelopment of all national subject syllabus statements. The Achievement Initiative comprised the second phase of significant reform of education in New Zealand. The first, Tomorrow's Schools, was concerned with educational administration, and involved the decentralisation of school administration and the devolution of power and responsibility onto local bodies. Schools became independent units managed by locally elected boards of trustees, but accountable to central organisations by means of the Education Review Office (ERO).¹ This phase of reform was initiated by the Labour Government in 1987 and was, according to Michael Peters, 'based on neo-liberal principles of individualism

and strategies of deregulation, corporatism and privatisation, [and] represent[ed] a commitment to the market distribution of public goods and services' (Carter and O'Neill 1995, 52).² It was in the context of these structural reforms and their informing ideology that the succeeding National Government began the reform of the curriculum and the national qualifications system.

One of the first stages of National's programme of curricular reform was the Education Amendment Act of 1990, which led to the formation of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The NZQA was commissioned to develop a framework for national qualifications, and The New Zealand Curriculum Framework was published in 1993, placing a special focus on learning objectives which were outlined across eight levels of achievement. All curriculum documents were to meet the general requirements of teaching and learning outlined in the Framework. Peters calls the National Government's development of a national curriculum 'an attempt to build a national culture of enterprise and competition' (Carter and O'Neill 1995, 52).

National's reforms of curriculum and assessment took place within a political context of New Right ideology, informed by neo-liberal economic theory. This ideology is based on the central assumption that all human behaviour can be explained in reference to self-interest, and the notion that the self-seeking behaviour of individuals in society inspires the most effective and efficient distribution of goods and services. Simon During describes the emergence of the New Right in Britain under Margaret Thatcher and in the United States under Ronald Reagan, and their central arguments:

First, that the state should intervene in citizens' lives to the minimum possible extent so that market forces can structure as many social relations and exchanges as possible, and, next, that the affirmation of internal differences (especially between classes, ethnic groups, and genders) could threaten national unity. The nation was defined in terms of traditional and popular national-cultural images of 'Englishness' in Thatcher's case and 'Americanness' in Reagan's.

(1993, 13)³

During the National Party's first term of office, which began in 1990, the three key social portfolios, Health, Education, and Social Welfare, along with the Ministry of Finance, went to sympathisers with and advocates of free market policies, and bodies such as Treasury, the States Services Commission, and the Business Round Table made the most of this opening to raise their demands for a deregulated economy and a 'user pays' education system. (Snook, in Carter and O'Neill 1995, 163). Indeed, Codd, McAlpine and Poskitt assert that National's Achievement Initiative 'originated in the state's response to a crisis of motivation conjured up by proponents of New Right ideology' (Peddie and Tuck 1995, 39). But, while the prevailing ideology of the New Right, as described, has had a significant influence on the various levels of reform in education in New Zealand, it is important to recognise that the development of curriculum and assessment took place in an environment of competing political forces and ideologies, and the documents and policies produced do not always represent a resolution of those conflicts. The English curriculum, as I have indicated, was produced over a period of twenty-five years, during which time there were several changes of government, and Stoop's analysis of the series of draft curriculum statements points to several aspects of those documents which bear the hallmarks of a changing political climate.

Marnie O'Neill observes that, by the 1990s, education had come to be seen as 'an instrument for the correction of economic ills' as 'governments assumed new market-orientated corporate identities' (Carter and O'Neill 1995, 3), resulting in the tailoring of schooling outcomes more closely to the needs of employers, and establishing clearer and more overt links between the worlds of schooling and employment. This is exemplified by Dr Maris O'Rourke's foreword to English in the New Zealand Curriculum, in which she claims that '[t]he curriculum statement focuses on developing the highest levels of literacy and understanding of language for a variety of purposes, to enable students to participate fully in society and the world of work' (Ministry of Education 1994, 5). Writing in the mid-1990s, Alan Barker, Strategic Manager for Policy, Research and Review with the NZQA, likewise describes a number of 'purchaser demands' on the education system which derive from students and their parents, the government, and employers. The needs of the purchaser to know what is being purchased, and that there will be a guarantee of quality in the product supplied by an education system operating within a free market economy, leads to questions of assessment and qualification; as Maxine Greene asserts, 'Standards, assessment, outcomes, and achievement: these concepts are the currency of educational discussion today' (1995, 9).

A central feature of the Framework produced by the NZQA is a form of criterion-referenced assessment called standards-based assessment, which measures and interprets a learner's performance by reference to a set of external standards or learning outcomes.⁴ It represents a significant departure from the previous system, norm-referenced assessment, in which an individual student's marks were awarded largely in relation to the performance of other students, often in a statistically

controlled exercise such as scaling, although Barker notes that standards-based assessment, like any system of assessment, must still rely on norms. Other commentators on the discussion surrounding standards-based assessment have likewise argued that it cannot exist without some concomitant element of norm-referencing, noting that, while the two may be at the opposite ends of the spectrum, it does not necessarily follow that they are or should be mutually exclusive (Codd, McAlpine and Poskitt, in Peddie and Tuck 1995, 43).⁵ It is interesting to note that one of the goals of criterion-referenced assessment is to minimise competitiveness, and yet this form of assessment was central to the New Right's reform of education. Bryan Tuck and Roger Peddie suggest that the NZQA's rigorous support for standards-based assessment is 'arguably linked to a government agenda of upskilling the labour force in an era of unemployment and national debt' (Peddie and Tuck 1995, 11), and this relates to another central aspect of the NZQA's mandate: to blur the distinction between education and training. This has led to a greater emphasis on skills over the traditional concepts of understanding and knowledge.

The NZQA's attempts to implement standards-based assessment have centred on the development of 'unit standards', independent and official documents setting out the learning outcomes for each segment of learning.⁶ Although no final or official position on unit standards appears to have been reached, the writers of English in the New Zealand Curriculum were aware of the potential of unit standards. There is evidence of this in the document they produced, which is divided into eight levels of attainment, and structured around three strands of learning. But before I discuss English in the New Zealand Curriculum in greater detail, I will give some background to the institutionalised study and teaching of English in New Zealand.

English has been central to the national curriculum of New Zealand since 1877, when a free and compulsory primary education system was instituted. The Thomas Report, implemented in 1945, established an official syllabus for English at forms three to five, and English became the only compulsory subject for entry to the University of New Zealand. Ian Gordon, writing in 1947, described English as

a threefold skill, the ability to express oneself in spoken or written speech and so to initiate communication; the ability to understand the spoken or written speech of another and so to complete the communication; and the ability to feel or appreciate the appeal of literature.

(42-3)

Gordon's statement described a significant departure from former English teaching practice, which involved such exercises as parsing passages of prose, rewriting literary extracts while retaining their style and register, and the rote learning of rhetorical figures, and there are clear similarities with the structure of the current document, notably in terms of the notion of the production and reception of meaning through language. The University Entrance examination prescription for English, revised in 1942 and introduced in 1944, was divided into three sections: the first tested the students' knowledge and command of English; the second examined their ability to write narrative, informative, expository, or imaginative prose on one of several given topics; and the third was concerned with their knowledge of the form and content of literature in English, from Shakespeare to the present (Gordon 1947, 59). Again, similarities to the current Bursary prescription may be observed, excluding the imaginative prose component, and these similarities are significant in terms of the development of the English curriculum which was to occur in ensuing years.

The syllabus implemented by the Thomas Report, and the influence of the University Entrance prescription on English teaching at senior levels, continued until after the Dartmouth Conference of 1966. In response to Dartmouth's proposed reforms of English curricula and teaching, the Department of Education in New Zealand set up in 1969 the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) to revise the 1945 syllabus for forms three to five. After almost fifteen years of discussion and research, the NESC published a new national English syllabus, English Forms 3-5: Statement of Aims, in 1983.

While Gordon's statement, written in 1947, and the University entrance examination prescription prior to the formation of the NESC in 1969, suggested that one third of the time allocated to English teaching should be devoted to literature, the reforms intended by the members of the NESC involved the reconceptualisation of English in relation to language and personal response, and a challenge to the central place of canonical literature in English courses. Particularly pertinent to the purposes of this discussion is the challenge posed by the NESC not only to the centrality of canonical texts in English courses, but to the ideology behind literature teaching. F.R. Leavis's belief in the civilising and socialising powers of literature had been pervasive in New Zealand as elsewhere, as is evident from Gordon's comments on literature, written soon after the implementation of the previous English curriculum in New Zealand (the Thomas Report of 1945): 'the end of the teaching of literature is ... the acquisition and development of an attitude towards the reading of books and the values that literature has to offer' (1947, 54). In the remark cited in the Introduction, Charles

Brasch similarly claims that ‘we shall not grow as a people, in any sense that matters, unless by [the] light [of the English language, poetry, and Shakespeare]’ (1964, 4).

It was within this pedagogical context that the NESC proposed both a shift away from traditional literature towards an increased focus on contemporary literature and media studies, and a move towards the cultural studies paradigm, as explained by John Frow:

one of the fundamental theses of work in Cultural Studies [is] that no object, no text, no cultural practice has an intrinsic or necessary meaning or value or function; and that meaning, value, and function are always the effect of specific social relations of signification.

(Mead and Campbell 1993, 212)

However, Stoop notes that ‘there was far less discontinuity with the past than the architects of the reforms intended’ (1998, 109). While significant changes were achieved, such as the use of the word ‘language’ to designate visual and non-verbal forms of communication along with its usual application, a new prioritising of the use of electronic media, and an emphasis on speaking, listening, viewing, and moving alongside reading and writing, the continuity described by Stoop is apparent in the position on literature articulated by the Statement of Aims, the curriculum document for forms three to five produced by the NESC in 1983: ‘An experience of life through literature is of great value, for with it can come an imaginative insight into other people’s lives, an extension of the individual’s own awareness and a development of that empathy which is part of the civilising and humanising tradition of literature’ (Department of Education 1983, 21).⁷

Although the NESC produced a curriculum statement for forms three to five in 1983, the Universities' entrance prescription, embodied in the University Entrance and Bursary examinations, continued to provide the source and basis for curriculum planning at senior levels until 1986, when the University Entrance exam was abolished, and the then Minister of Education, Russell Marshall, approved the formation of a Forms Six and Seven English Syllabus Committee. After the distribution and processing of a number of discussion papers, this committee released a draft syllabus in 1987. Just two years later, however, the Ministry of Education published a second draft syllabus which departed significantly from the intentions of the writers of its predecessor. The Ministry of Education then called for public tenders and let the contract to write the final draft to the Christchurch College of Education, which released its statement in December 1990.

Meanwhile, there had been a change of government, and a group of teachers had lobbied Marshall's successor, Lockwood Smith, on the grounds that they felt that the statement being prepared by the Christchurch College of Education group would prove unsuitable for implementation as a national curriculum statement. Smith formed a committee to review this document, which agreed that it should be revised by a further group, and Professor Roger Robinson was contracted to write a new curriculum statement. Robinson's appointment and the Minister's role in it were controversial, as was the make-up of his advisory group, two of whose five members were vehement detractors of the earlier draft syllabus. In 1992, the Ministry of Education released the Robinson statement, the Draft Syllabus for Schools: English Forms 6 and 7. By this stage, however, the National Government had launched the Achievement Initiative calling for a review of all national subject syllabuses, which

meant that the Robinson draft became just one of several syllabus statements that would provide the basis for the development of what eventually became English in the New Zealand Curriculum. The contract to develop the final national curriculum statement was let to the Auckland College of Education, but their progress was to be monitored by a policy advisory group, formed by Lockwood Smith and chaired by Robinson. A draft was released in September 1993, and, after the publication of a number of working papers and the release of a questionnaire to a sample of schools for their responses, a group led by Barbara Mabbett, the former head of Learning Media, wrote the final statement.⁸

Stoop notes that the Robinson draft syllabus of 1992 bears little relation to the document released by the Forms Six and Seven English Syllabus Committee in 1989, or to the discussion papers on which that draft was based. It will be most pertinent here to recount the Robinson draft's position on literature, in which may be detected some of the more significant departures from earlier statements. There had been an attempt during the drafting of the first senior syllabus statement to continue the challenge to the traditional literary critical method begun by the NESC. The debate covered such issues as the place of canonical authors and established literature, and whether they should be replaced in the syllabus by contemporary writers and works; the New Zealand literature component; the role of film and whether or not it could and should be classed as literature; and the cultural balance of reading lists. It extended even to the question of whether or not literature should be a compulsory component of English courses. Also central to the discussion surrounding the teaching of literature was the question of 'response' as opposed to critical analysis. An emphasis on response would allow for such questions of social and cultural difference

and gender, among others, to enter into discussion of literature alongside the more conventional explication of literary texts in terms of genre, structure, content, and form. The Robinson draft, however, stressed reading ‘carefully, closely, sensitively, and critically,’ with close reference to the text to ground discussion and analysis, as well as ‘a working knowledge of literary conventions and terms’ (cited in Stoop 1998, 135).

In reference to literary texts, English in the New Zealand Curriculum states that ‘[t]he English curriculum affirms the importance of literature for literacy development, for imaginative development, and for developing personal, social, historical, and national awareness and identity’ (Ministry of Education 1994, 16). It continues to call for a focus, particularly at senior levels, on ‘the development of the skills of literary criticism’ (16), with no reference to the emphases of Cultural Studies, central to the challenge of the Leavisite model of reading which had characterised much of the debate on literature. On the other hand, it emphasises the need to cover ‘a range of literature, including popular literature, traditional stories, children’s literature, and literary texts with established critical reputations’ (16); it stresses the need for balance in the selection of texts from New Zealand and elsewhere, and calls for the inclusion of texts which reflect the cultural diversity of individual classes. In these ways, it reflects some of the other issues at the heart of the discussion concerning the place of literature in the new syllabus. The document’s position on this aspect of English programmes and teaching thus bears witness to more far-reaching tensions in the document, arising from a need to negotiate the many and diverse attitudes and beliefs concerning English in schools articulated by all those contributing to the development of the curriculum over a number of years. Stoop

describes the many different influences on the development of the English curriculum as ‘a complex and contradictory amalgam of understandings and approaches,’ representing ‘an ideological disjunction that is present in the text discourse: a personal growth model of English teaching linked with an outcomes-based model’ (179, 184).⁹ The conflicting political forces at work as well as the change of government which took place during the extensive period of reform of the English curriculum must also have influenced the final version’s somewhat ambiguous position on literature.

The significant point to recognise here is that, while the new curriculum widens the definition of what may be considered a literary text, and may therefore be included in English reading lists, it does not necessarily encourage awareness or dissemination of new ways of reading literary texts, despite its suggestion that ‘[s]tudents ... should reflect on the different social assumptions, judgments, and beliefs which are embodied in texts, and which different people bring to language and learning’ (12). There is in the curriculum no encouragement or necessity for teachers to move away from the liberal humanist approach to reading texts, to provide Marxist, feminist or materialist contexts for reading, or to introduce aspects of poststructuralist theory when teaching a literary work, or indeed any text, in the secondary English classroom. Rather, the curriculum document is preoccupied with the description of a series of skills which students are required to attain and employ. Hence English in the New Zealand Curriculum does not represent any significant move beyond the position on literary texts expressed in the earlier curriculum statements, but merely rephrases the ‘civilising and humanising tradition’ as identity formation: ‘English in the New Zealand Curriculum affirms the importance of literature ... for developing personal, social, historical, and national awareness and identity’ (16).

Another important aspect of English in the New Zealand Curriculum in the context of this discussion is its division of language study into three separately articulated but not discrete language strands: written, oral, and visual. As has been noted, questions over the primacy of listening and speaking skills, and the importance of media literacy had been part of the debate surrounding English curricula around the world since the Dartmouth conference. Significantly, New Zealand was the first country to adopt a curriculum structure based on the three strands, and to place them on an equal footing.¹⁰ Each of the language strands is to be explored in terms of three ‘processes’ which the curriculum calls ‘Exploring Language’, ‘Thinking Critically’, and ‘Processing Information’ (the skills alluded to above), and each strand has a reception and a production component, in turn divided into several functions, in the context of which the skills may be assessed.

This tripartite structure responds to The New Zealand Curriculum Framework’s position on language:

the ability to use spoken and written language effectively, to read and to listen, and to discern critically messages from television, film, the computer, and other visual media is fundamental both to learning and to effective participation in society and the work-force.

(cited in Ministry of Education 1994, 6)

English in the New Zealand Curriculum claims to focus on ‘developing the highest levels of literacy and understanding of language for a variety of purposes, to enable students to participate fully in society and the world of work’ (Ministry of Education 1994, 5). These assertions require us to interpret the structure of the curriculum in the light of the New Right ideologies, described above, which influenced the

development of curricula in New Zealand from the past decade or so, and the emphasis placed on the development of skills demanded by the workforce in a market-driven economy in particular. One of the characteristic features of the English curriculum is the articulation of English teaching in terms of skills, goals, and outcomes, and of particular importance to this discussion is the relationship between reading literary texts and the acquisition of skills for the achievement of goals. This question necessarily leads to a consideration of the assessment of literature study, most significantly in the University Entrance and Bursaries examination.

While the English curriculum was undergoing extensive alterations in terms of structure and content, the Bursary English examination has remained relatively unchanged. It comprises four sections: the first involves the comparative close reading of a poem and a short piece of prose; the second is concerned with various language functions, such as the language of advertising or of oratory, and the peculiar characteristics of New Zealand English; the third is Shakespeare; and the fourth offers students the choice of discussing several genres including the novel, non-Shakespearean drama, poetry, short stories, and film. Shakespeare, as has been noted, is the only author whose works are specified for compulsory study and examination, a point on which English in the New Zealand Curriculum is surprisingly and significantly silent. Indeed, this issue reveals the conflict between the curriculum and the senior level external examination, in that the Bursary paper does not reflect many significant aspects of the curriculum, and this raises the question of the relationship between the two. The question of assessment was deferred when the new national curriculum was implemented, but work is under way as part of the current

government's Achievement 2001 project to bring assessment procedures into line with the new curriculum document.¹¹

One of the key issues debated throughout this extended period of reform was the compulsory status of the works of Shakespeare within the English curriculum. During the initial period of the development of the senior English syllabus in the late 1980s, Elody Rathgen, reporting on the progress of the project in English in Aotearoa, wrote: 'In response to overwhelming teacher request, it was decided that study of a Shakespearian play should remain compulsory in the seventh form' (English in Aotearoa No. 14, 32). However, the reasons why teachers should request this so overwhelmingly are not stated, perhaps because they were not given by the teachers who lent their support to compulsory Shakespeare. In a survey of the wider debate over the teaching of 'great books', Peter Roberts writes:

all claims about the value of texts must be qualified. We need to ask: Valuable on what criteria? For whom? Under what conditions? For what purpose? These questions are commonly disregarded or scorned: it is often taken for granted that we all (in the academic establishment anyway) *know* what makes a book great.

(Peters 1997, 114)

This observation that we tend to be unquestioning as to what constitutes the value of a core text is especially pertinent to the issue of compulsory Shakespeare, particularly if, as Campbell argues, 'it is not that civilised value and human meaning inevitably reside in Shakespeare, but that certain societies have learned to *locate* them there' (Mead and Campbell 1993, 2). As David Margolies observes,

[t]he Shakespeare [students] receive in school ... is already defined and packaged by the culture: serious, good for them, studiable, with heavy ideas meant for analysis, in a language that must be read through footnotes because the footnotes deliver the heavy ideas that then seem the stuff of which the plays are made.

(Holderness 1988, 52)

Derek Longhurst similarly asserts that

[i]t is, surely, undeniable that the dominant figuration of Shakespeare within the institutions committed to the reproduction of the values of 'high' culture is articulated around his texts as embodiments of literary genius constituted in a coalescence of the 'flowering' of the English language and the (consequent?) 'universal' truths of human experience.

(Holderness 1988, 61)

The precedent for Shakespeare's centrality in English courses is at least partially historical: Ian Gordon, writing a commentary on English teaching in New Zealand in 1947, sets Shakespeare apart for separate discussion from his treatment of literature teaching, claiming that the division 'appears ... invariably in all English programmes' (77). The distinction was not limited to secondary schools, and, given the influence of the universities on senior syllabi, is unlikely to have originated there: during the late 1960s, the official position of the English Department of the University of Auckland was, as Neill observes, 'effectively defined by what would now be called a "mission statement" undertaking to introduce students to the whole sweep of English literature from Beowulf to the present day, "with Shakespeare as its centre"' (1998, 130). This may be explained with reference to Michael Peters's observation that '[t]he New Zealand university system ... [has] its roots ... in the soil of British colonialism, and the early provincial university at Otago and Canterbury College were colonial

institutional sites for the circulation of a British national culture or “civilisation” (1997, 19), as well as in the light of my discussion in the Introduction of Shakespeare’s deployment in colonial New Zealand as the embodiment of ‘British national culture’.

The debate about the role of canonical literature in English courses in general, and about the centrality of Shakespeare in particular, has by no means been limited to New Zealand, and it is appropriate at this point to consider the nature of the debate as it has been carried out in Britain. In Shakespeare in the Classroom Susan Leach discusses an interview with Professor Brian Cox, one of the architects of the National Curriculum in Britain and author of the Cox Report of 1989. Leach’s comments are worth quoting at length, since they represent so nearly the main body of arguments in favour of Shakespeare within and outside of Britain: Cox, she writes, had

four main reasons for wanting Shakespeare in the National Curriculum: first, the belief that the kind of ‘great’ literature written by Shakespeare encompasses wisdom; second, that ‘these great works’ are part of our cultural heritage, are central to our culture, and that every child has the right to be introduced to them; third, that Shakespeare ‘uses language in a way beyond that of any other writer, and his language has been influential beyond that of any other writer.’ Lastly, that Shakespeare has greater insight into human character than other writers. Additional reasons are that the history of the development of the English language is intimately bound up with Shakespeare’s language, and that to deprive pupils of the experience of this language, and this knowledge, is as bad and diminishing as depriving pupils of the opportunity to become competent in Standard English.

(1992, 22-3)

In a critique of the kind of position espoused by Cox, Marion Campbell writes:

the name of Shakespeare is widely invoked in current debates about educational standards and cultural values. Curiously, however, conservative defenders of his central place in 'our' society never feel obliged to specify what his value consists in, beyond gesturing vaguely towards his universal insight and linguistic richness. Instead he seems to function silently to define and consolidate both that 'we' and that 'society'.

(Mead and Campbell 1993, 2)

Indeed, the position of Cox, like the view expressed by Brasch in the remark cited above, must be seen as problematic: both, whether directly or implicitly, raise the question of cultural and linguistic exclusion which the study of Shakespeare may encourage.¹² Brasch does so most glaringly in his reference to 'a country whose language is English ... *some of whose* children absorb unconsciously the great weight and range and richness of English' (my italics), while Leach, commenting on Cox's arguments for compulsory Shakespeare, insists:

[a] plethora of questions is provoked by these views: Whose culture? What wisdom? Who defined it as wisdom? In what ways are these works central to our culture? What does Professor Cox mean by cultural heritage – the heritage of which people? How has this language of Shakespeare been influential?

(1992, 23)

All of these questions may, and, I argue, should be considered in relation to Shakespeare's core status in New Zealand, and to the way that Shakespeare is studied and taught in our classrooms, particularly in the light of such testimony as that of Witi Ihimaera, who describes the way that Shakespeare was taught to him at school as the epitome of white Western culture, a cultural heritage from which he, as Maori, was comprehensively excluded:

I'm sorry to say that Shakespeare became so closely associated with the syllabus that I developed an intense dislike of his work. Well I suppose you can't blame him, it's not his fault, but he became the iconic representation of all that the New Zealand education system was, a system that was hostile to Maori and privileged white texts.¹³

Samoan playwright and actor Oscar Kightly describes Shakespeare as 'just some bald white guy who wore stockings all the time', adding that 'that's the way he was taught in schools – he was this flash guy who wrote stuff that you couldn't understand'.¹⁴ Ihimaera similarly asserts that 'he was white, had a bald head, sometimes a pointed beard, and he looked like our headmaster'. Moreover, 'the language was totally unfathomable. He was supposed to represent, in capital letters, The Best in Western Literature, and I couldn't even understand all their talk'.

It is difficult, in the light of such testimony, to uphold the case for Shakespeare's place in the curriculum on the grounds of his timeless universality. In the words of Ihimaera,

Shakespeare still remains a white man who has written white texts which occupy the central canon, has had a colonising impact on all indigenous people, and if we are unable to escape this influence, still controls the way in which we think We must try to stop looking through the frame of Shakespeare.

Ihimaera, Kightly, and director Christian Penney, however, propose a means of remedy for the problem which Ian Mune, a pakeha actor and director, diagnoses: 'we have not addressed the playwright specifically from our South Pacific perspective at all; rather, we have reinforced his, and our Englishness'.¹⁵ Kightly insists that 'to me Shakespeare is someone to be appropriated and sampled', suggesting that reading and

performing Shakespeare should be a matter of simply taking ‘the best bits’. Kightly’s definition of sampling is modestly reductive: within the hip-hop culture, from which he borrows the term, sampling is ‘the recontextualization of preexisting compositions: [DJs] can take material from one format and transfer it from a given context to another, thereby creating their own “mixes”’ (Sanjek, 344). Penney advocates a similar strategy of ‘fusion’, in which elements of other (or Other) cultures be allowed to circulate and interact freely with the Shakespearean text.¹⁶ Ihimaera calls this process of appropriating Shakespeare ‘[putting] the moko of Maoridom on Shakespeare I know that he can be, for want of a better word, Maorified’.

Several examples of the kind of project advocated by Ihimaera, Kightly, Penney, and Mune already exist. Some comprise direct translations of the Shakespearean text into Maori, such as Pei Te Hurunui Jones’s translation of The Merchant of Venice and Merimeri Penfold’s Nga Waiata Aroha a Hekepia, a translation into Maori of nine of Shakespeare’s sonnets. Other examples take the Shakespearean text and locate it in a New Zealand or Pacific context, such as the 1996 production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream performed by the graduating class of Te Toi Whakaari (The New Zealand Drama School) in which the characters wore tapa cloth costumes and the fairies were played by Maori and Polynesian actors, or the 2001 production of Othello at the Court Theatre in Christchurch, which cast Maori actor Jim Moriarty as Othello and set the play during the New Zealand Land Wars of the 1860s. Kightly has written and performed in a play which constitutes an example of his own technique of ‘sampling’ entitled Romeo and Tusi, which he describes not as a version or an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, but as a kind of ‘parallel’ to it: he admits to not having read the whole of Romeo and Juliet, claiming he just took ‘the best bits’ and

inserted them into his own text. The effect of Kightly's sampling technique, however, is more complex and significant than the mere insertion of 'bits' of Shakespeare into another text; rather, the recontextualisation of the Shakespearean text creates a new 'mix' which is expressive of the identity and concerns of the Polynesian New Zealand community out of and about which Kightly writes.

Roma Potiki argues that

[t]he process of colonisation has been very thorough. It has penetrated so deeply as to dislocate many of us even from our own culture. This dislocation causes a lack of confidence in ourselves and our opinions, a pervasive anxiety. In turn this anxiety profits those individuals and institutions that still condescend and patronise us.

(1993, 316)

It would be pointless to deny that the education system in New Zealand has been one of those institutions which Potiki implicates in the project of colonisation and the dislocation of indigenous and non-pakeha peoples from their own cultures. If this is to cease to be the case, and if we are to stop enlisting Shakespeare as a tool of colonisation and cultural disenfranchisement, it is crucial that we become more open in the classroom to the kinds of cross-cultural appropriations and samples described above.

The analysis of Maori, Polynesian, and New Zealand adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare is not my project here, although I hope that someone will take this question as the central premise for a thesis some time in the near future, particularly in the light of the forthcoming film of Pei Te Hurunui Jones's Maori translation of The Merchant of Venice. My concern is with the broad question of cross-cultural

appropriation, however, and one of the fundamental premises of my analysis of Shakespearean films in the chapters that follow is the question of contextualisation: despite claims for the inherent universality of the themes of the Shakespearean text, a film of Shakespeare is nonetheless a local reading, both historically and culturally, of a text produced in a very different historical and cultural context, and thus constitutes, in some form at least, a cross-cultural appropriation. A clear example of this is Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, which appropriates the Shakespearean text in the service of an historically specific youth cultural agenda. I will also assess the usefulness and impact of critical theory, examined through the lens of Shakespearean film, in dismantling Shakespeare's colonising power so that the openness to cross-cultural approaches to Shakespeare, whether they be Maori, American, Samoan, South African, or Australian, becomes possible in the classroom and in the community.

Graham Holderness and Andrew Murphy insist that 'Shakespeare ... has always been of centrally strategic importance in the battleground formed by the intersection of education and politics' (Joughin 1997, 20), and, while this statement was written in reference to the British educational establishment, it may likewise be applied to its New Zealand counterpart: as noted above, the English curriculum 'affirms the importance of literature ... for developing personal, social, historical, and national awareness and identity' (16). Among the literature being studied in English programmes, Shakespeare continues to be not only a key text, but one whose place must be affirmed by his being compulsory. It seems to me that the significance of Shakespeare's centrality in 'the intersection of education and politics' which, it has been established, produced English in the New Zealand Curriculum, is curious. This

curriculum document emphasises the acquisition of and an ability to demonstrate proficiency in a series of skills related to language use and communication, and yet Shakespeare's compulsory centrality is largely historical and ideological. Michael Neill writes that

the universalist assumptions of the discipline in which I was educated at the University of Otago in the early sixties, with its confident talk of the 'great tradition,' have been thoroughly dismantled, above all by the efforts of feminist and post-colonial critics who have demonstrated that no canon can be ideologically innocent.

(1998, 130)

It is my contention that the 'universalist assumptions' to which Neill refers, although 'dismantled' in university English departments, are still influential in secondary school English programmes.

This question of the influence of modern critical theory is central to much of what has been written concerning the study and teaching of Shakespeare at secondary and tertiary levels. The conservative, liberal humanist approach, which consists in reading the plays as stable, determinate texts embodying universal truths, essential and timeless human values and readily accessible characters who feel like we do, and written by a man of genius who single-handedly transformed the use of the English language, appears to be the dominant model for teaching and examining Shakespearean texts at secondary level. For instance, John Peck and Martin Coyle had this to say in their book entitled How to Study a Shakespeare Play:

Shakespeare is exploring the reality of human experience, the way in which people do act. He is making us aware of how society is complex because people

are complex; of how individual instincts and passions disturb any ideal of a harmonious society.

(1995, 10)

They go on to add that Shakespeare's plays 'present a fuller and more complex sense of the nature of experience than all other writers.' (1995, 11). Moreover, they assert that all of Shakespeare's plays may be interpreted and understood according to the principle of order versus disorder. My research into the theory and practice of teaching Shakespeare at secondary school in New Zealand and elsewhere suggests that the plays, particularly the tragedies, are being widely read along the kinds of lines being proposed by Peck and Coyle.

Many commentators on the state of contemporary Shakespeare teaching locate the source of the continued advocacy of the humanist model within the educational establishment, and particularly with examiners. R.A. Foakes claims that the adoption of Shakespeare as the central author within English syllabi has seemed to 'establish him as a fount of wisdom and to put forward the view that there was a single determinate meaning in the plays' (McIver and Stevenson 1994, 63). Bob Allen makes a similar criticism of the role of the educational establishment in perpetuating the conservative approach to the plays, outlining some of what he considers to be problems in contemporary Shakespeare teaching. He claims that 'the examinations system ... tends not to encourage fundamental critical evaluation of the economic, social, and political cultures embodied in the plays,' and also that 'some teachers and examiners tend to present the plays as if they were self-contained, coherent entities, embodying universal values, rather than works read, performed, and watched in an evolving historical and social context' (Aers and Wheale 1991, 42-3). Alan Sinfield argues that literature questions on Shakespeare

[a]lmost invariably ... assum[e] that the plays reveal universal 'human' values and qualities and that they are self-contained and coherent entities Even the occasional question about staging is liable to involve the assumption that there is a true reading behind the diverse possibilities.

(Dollimore and Sinfield 1985, 138-9)

David Hornbrook concurs:

In general the questions on the examination papers which lay out the parameters of most school Shakespeare teaching reveal a continuing commitment to well-established and familiar conceptions Teachers in schools, with whatever degree of reluctance ... subscribe to the powerful sense of humanity evinced by [Leavis's] defence of the canon.

(Holderness 1988, 145-6)

The existence of a like trend in New Zealand may be demonstrated by reference to the kinds of questions that crop up in Section C of the University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships English examination, questions which exercise considerable influence over the way that Shakespeare is taught and studied at secondary level.

The University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships English prescription states that in Section C of the examination, 'Candidates will be required to answer a question on a Shakespearian play, to be chosen from a list of five. Questions will be set on each play, requiring candidates to write an essay in response to either an extract or a topic.' The Shakespeare question, worth 20 per cent of the paper, is designed to test the student's ability in relation to the process of Thinking Critically and the function of Transactional Writing, each of which is set out in English in the New Zealand Curriculum, in terms of the achievement objectives for Level Eight. This suggests that, according to the terms of the Bursary examination and the skills-based language

of the curriculum, all that students are required to do when studying a Shakespeare play is to Think Critically, and then be able express their thoughts lucidly in informative prose. It ought, therefore, to be possible to deduce what is meant by thinking critically about a Shakespeare play by an analysis of some of the questions from Section C.

In 1996 and 1997, the plays for examination were Othello, King Lear, The Tempest, As You Like It, and Henry V. In 1998 and 1999 Antony and Cleopatra, Much Ado About Nothing, and Richard III joined Othello and The Tempest, and in 2000 King Lear returned in the place of Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet replaced Othello, while Much Ado About Nothing, The Tempest, and Richard III were carried over. These follow the typical pattern of recent years to include two tragedies, two comedies, and one history play in the rotation of set plays, although markers' reports and anecdotal evidence from teachers suggest that the tragedies are taught markedly more frequently than either comedies or histories. One of the primary reasons for this relates to the kinds of questions typically put by the Bursary paper. As the prescription states, candidates are given the option of discussing an extract from the play or answering a general question (before 1998 there had been a choice of two general questions), and both questions almost invariably invite candidates to talk about the play broadly or specifically in terms of theme or character. The belief, apparently widespread among teachers but difficult to account for, that the themes and characters of the tragedies are more weighty, and therefore more worthy of study, seems often to lead to a general preference for tragedies over other genres.

Houlahan notes that almost 50% of the Shakespeare questions between 1977 and 2001 have been primarily concerned with character, while another 30% dealt with themes, and this pattern is certainly borne out by the papers from the past few years. The first question on Antony and Cleopatra from the 1998 exam asks students to explain how Philo's speech from 1.1 concerning 'this dotage of our General's' introduces 'many of the issues that the play explores,' while the general question states: 'Antony and Cleopatra may be seen as a play about the clash between public and private worlds or the clash between the worlds of Rome and Egypt. Consider ONE of these clashes, making detailed reference to the play.' Similarly, the second question on Othello asks students to 'discuss some of the ways in which race contributes to the tragedy of Othello,' while that on The Tempest says: 'While it begins as a play about revenge, The Tempest ends as a play about forgiveness. Discuss this change in the play with close reference to several scenes.' All of these questions clearly relate to the themes, or, as the paper puts it, the 'issues' of the plays. Even the question on Much Ado About Nothing which asks students to discuss the play's title in relation to its 'subject' invites, or at least permits, students to bring in discussion of themes. The extract question on Much Ado About Nothing from the 2000 paper asks students to discuss what the opening passage of the play 'tell[s] us about the way the themes and characters of the play will develop'.

Both of the questions on Richard III are concerned with character: the first asks students to discuss the character of Richard, with reference to his speech in 5.4 while the second asks them to consider the importance of one of the women characters to the play. The extract question on Othello requires students to relate Iago's motives, as expressed in his speech from 2.1 beginning 'That Cassio loves her, I do well believe

it,' to the 'tragedy of the play.' One question on both Much Ado About Nothing and The Tempest calls for a discussion of the relationship between two characters in the play, Beatrice and Benedick in the first case, and Prospero and Caliban in the second, while another question on Much Ado instructs students to describe 'comparisons and contrasts ... between the two sets of lovers, Beatrice and Benedick, and Hero and Claudio'. A question on King Lear calls for a discussion of 'the characters of the two sisters, Goneril and Regan'.

Michael Hattaway traces the origins of the character-based study of Shakespeare to the Romantic critical tradition, and James Cunningham acknowledges its indebtedness to the pervasive influence of A. C. Bradley's moralistic character-centred analyses. Hattaway describes the enormous limitations inherent in this mode of Shakespeare teaching, which he calls 'extremely reductive', arguing that

essays at [secondary and undergraduate] level are all too often merely a series of character sketches. This concentration on personality, the subject, is in fact an ideological assumption: it tends to rest on the myth of an unchanging 'human nature'... defined in predominantly moral terms; neglects external realities and the ways in which individual consciousness or individuality may be a product of these realities; and thereby is oblivious to the possibility of political and social change. It ends by suppressing not only ethical awareness but even the possibility of studying the way an author makes words work, of learning about *characterisation*.

(1987, 38, Hattaway's italics)

The question of the study of character is one to which I propose to return later in this thesis.

Despite the preponderance of questions on character and theme, some topics do offer a somewhat wider scope. One of the questions on Henry V, for example, asks candidates to think about 'the controversial nature of both the play as a whole and its central character' by discussing episodes which might 'give rise to conflicting interpretations,' while a question on The Tempest asks the candidate to consider the matter of genre, referring to the play as a 'tragicomedy/romance.' The third topic for each play in the 1997 paper is the same, and invites students to 'Identify and illustrate any THREE features of the dramatic world of [the play] which have interested you.' Perhaps most adventurous and challenging of all is the question on Hamlet from the 2000 paper which invites students to consider reasons for the inclusion or exclusion of the 'How all occasions do inform against me' soliloquy in 'a performance or a modern edition of the play', thus requiring an acknowledgment of the fluid nature of the Shakespearean text, and an awareness of matters pertaining both to editing and to performance.¹⁷

To say that all the questions in Section C of the Bursary examination limit discussion of the play to theme and character, with the odd question on genre and dramatic effect, would be unjust. However, to claim that they encourage new ways of reading Shakespeare, in the light of the developments made in recent critical theory described above by Neill, would be misleading. Questions such as that from the 1998 paper which asks students to talk about the relationship between Prospero and Caliban in The Tempest, like that in the 1996 paper which calls for a discussion of Stephano's description of Caliban as a 'monster of the isle,' are open to readings informed by postcolonial theory, but do not actively encourage them. The question on women characters in Richard III from the 1998 examination is likewise suitable for the

introduction of feminist interpretations, but may equally be answered without reference to feminism. The legacy of A. C. Bradley is evident in the papers' predominant emphasis on Shakespeare as narrative, and questions which encourage a consideration of the plays as theatre or performance are infrequent. Nor do the majority of questions betray any real attempt to have candidates examine the plays in terms of the three language strands of the curriculum, and their understanding of Shakespeare is assessed solely through their ability to produce written language.

The ways in which the study of Shakespeare continues to be assessed do nothing to challenge my contention that the reasons for Shakespeare's unrivalled position in English courses have more to do with Shakespeare's utter embeddedness in the culture of New Zealand as a former colony than with curricular issues concerning language and literacy, and that the retention of Shakespeare's compulsory status is a matter of historical precedent as much as it is a question of pedagogy. Moreover, despite the emphasis of the new curriculum on skills, which would seem to invite an exploration of new ways of reading texts, both written and audio-visual, the pattern of questions on the Bursary examination continues to promote a liberal humanist approach to the plays which involves reading the plays as though they were novels or long poems, and which fails to address such crucial issues as the potential for the marginalisation of female and non-pakeha students.

Michael Neill's description of Shakespeare's becoming 'a New Zealand dramatist' does not refer to a process which is complete. If we are to go on studying and teaching Shakespeare in this country, we must continue to recreate Shakespeare as a New

Zealand dramatist. It is not enough to rest on a belief that Shakespeare's themes embody universal human truths, because then we lose sight of the historically located power of the texts, and minimise the significance of contemporary and local readings. It is insufficient to claim that Shakespeare should continue to be studied because he is central to our culture, because the notions of 'we' and 'culture', as Leach and Campbell have observed, are problematic in the universality they claim and the homogeneity they imply. And the argument that Shakespeare and the English language are inseparable should remind us that not all of those who call themselves New Zealanders (or Australians or British or Americans) speak English as a first language. It is crucial to the continuation of the study and teaching of Shakespeare in this country and elsewhere that all those of us who are involved in the enterprise resist occupying the position described by Campbell in which we consider that 'Shakespeare is *implicitly* meaningful, his worth *goes without saying*, his greatness is *self-evident*' (Mead and Campbell 1993, 2), but rather that we continually revisit the question of what and how Shakespeare signifies in New Zealand and throughout the western world.

One of the tools available for deployment in the task of revisiting the question of Shakespeare's signifying power is theory. Ray Misson, writing about and for secondary school English teachers, observes that '[i]t is often feared that theory may be irrelevant and constricting' (1998, 2), but I intend, through the use of Shakespearean film, to demonstrate, as Misson argues, that theory is 'in fact ... highly practical in its implications and wonderfully liberating' (1998, 2). Since, as Misson puts it, '[t]heory starts when you ask the questions, what are the conditions that enable

this text to mean something, and what are the conditions that enable me to construct a meaning out of this text?', it thus equips teachers to 'develop better strategies for teaching ... students to read, and it gives us a better understanding of how particular texts are working' (1998, 1-2).

The Level 3 Draft Achievement Standard for Shakespeare, which, it is proposed, will replace Section C of the University Entrance and Bursaries examination,¹⁸ encouragingly, albeit vaguely, calls for critical theory to play a greater role in the study of Shakespeare at senior secondary levels, requiring, as it does, students to '[d]evelop a critical response to Shakespearean drama' (Crown, 1). This will be based on the analysis of either 'a passage from a Shakespearean text' or 'selected aspect(s) of a Shakespearean text' (1).¹⁹ A 'critical response' is defined as including a consideration of '[a]spects such as theme(s), setting, characterisation, context (social, political, historical ...), conventions of genre, positioning of reader ...', or ' "[m]ethods or procedures used in constructing and shaping text" (EiNZC glossary) e.g. structure, method of narration, style, literary features ...' (1). While the familiar emphases on theme, character, and setting continue to exert an influence, it is promising that such aspects as the position of the reader, generic conventions, and contextuality are granted equivalent weight. Whether this will prove to be the case in practice, however, remains to be seen. It is my contention that Shakespearean film can be used in the classroom in such a way as to demonstrate the ways in which theory may be brought to bear on the development of a critical response to Shakespeare.

In response to the question 'Why do we teach Shakespeare?' Annabel Patterson asserts that to ask this question

is actually to beg the central question of what 'Shakespeare' has meant in Anglo-American culture hitherto, and whether that meaning is fixed or contingent, flexible to pedagogic strategy and individual conviction. The question would be clearer if reformulated as '*How* do we teach Shakespeare?' or '*What* Shakespeare do we teach?' Either implies that we have a choice of methods and foci.

(McIver and Stevenson 1994, 223)

Patterson goes on to suggest that 'the Shakespearean playtext is, rather, a screen upon which the *difference* between value systems is rendered in particularly sharp focus [which] is stimulating to readers of all persuasions precisely because it is contestatory, because its allegiances cannot easily be identified' (224). This assertion is particularly interesting both for its similarity to Holderness's battle-cry for contestatory Shakespeare teaching, and for its unwittingly telling use of the word 'screen.' It is certain that the examination questions on Shakespeare which have so much influence on the way the plays are taught and studied, while mostly open to the application of many different approaches and ways of reading, do not actively promote such a play of difference, but it may be that the use of film in teaching Shakespeare can provide the 'screen' upon which that play of difference may be explored and activated.

It is in the context both of bringing new ways of reading to the exercise of studying Shakespeare in schools, and of integrating the skills of reading written, oral, and visual language, that I believe Shakespearean film may have a significant impact on Shakespeare studies in particular, and English studies in general. This brings me back to the quotation from Holderness with which I began. Holderness argues that 'film

and television productions can be introduced into literature courses, posing fundamental cultural questions, liberating radical possibilities of meaning and contributing to the much needed politicisation of the “Shakespeare” institution,’ while I would add that the ability to liberate radical possibilities of meaning relies on the development of an ability to recognise and construct meaning from verbal and visual signifiers. To say that film is not widely used as a resource in the teaching of Shakespeare in New Zealand secondary schools would be untrue. However, to claim that film and television productions of Shakespeare’s plays are used in the New Zealand English classroom to ‘[pose] fundamental cultural questions’ or to ‘[liberate] radical possibilities of meaning’ would be equally so. Indeed, secondary level Shakespeare teaching in this country is for the most part firmly entrenched in the liberal humanist model of reading Shakespeare which prevents what Holderness calls the ‘politicisation of the “Shakespeare” institution,’ and the use of film is a tool of that model, rather than a means of opening the texts to new ways of reading.

The introduction of film into Shakespeare courses has been one of the most significant developments in Shakespeare teaching in secondary schools since the late 1970s, particularly since the video player has become a commonplace in many schools and classrooms: writing in 1992, Leach observes that ‘[v]ideo is now common in English classrooms, where “seeing the video” has become equated with “doing” the book’ (60), and this is equally true of the New Zealand secondary English classroom. However, the introduction of a new medium and a new resource to the teaching of Shakespeare does not necessarily involve the kind of ‘cultural intervention’ that Graham Holderness calls for. Indeed, it is my contention in this thesis that, far from ‘posing fundamental cultural questions, liberating radical

possibilities of meaning and contributing to the much needed politicisation of the “Shakespeare” institution’ (Shaughnessy 1998, 81), the use of film and television versions of Shakespeare in the classroom continues to be in the service of a conservative mode of reading the Shakespearean text which looks back to A. C. Bradley’s character-based analyses and F. R. Leavis’s belief in the civilising influence of the canon, and which is ultimately predicated on the liberal humanist recourse to the inspired mind of the author.

Leach argues insightfully that, since many teachers have not been equipped with the skills involved with the analysis of filmic and televisual texts, they tend to resort to the methods associated with literary critical practice, and that the result usually limits the use of Shakespeare on film in the classroom to ‘comparison with the printed text as used in the classroom, perceptions of where cuts and changes have been made, observations about the setting and the acting, and comparisons with theatre productions of the same play’, rather than a ‘critique of the new-minted television text in terms of itself’ (69).²⁰ The ‘crucial question’, as Leach puts it, is this: ‘what are teachers using video versions of Shakespeare for?’ (69); she bravely asserts the belief that ‘using video is in many ways an opting out, seen by teachers as a panacea for the difficulties of having to deal with long texts with students who may not be very receptive to them’ (71). The findings of my own research, it must be said, support this position, and moreover the examples of the use of film versions of Shakespeare that I have discovered in theory and in practice chime very nearly with Leach’s suggestion that

on the whole [teachers] are using them to enable students to learn the narrative sequences, to find ‘character’ illuminated by seeing and hearing the words of

the play physicalized, to give the text some 'reality' and palpable existence, and so that students can visualize what up to then has only existed in their imaginations.

(69)

Few teachers using film deviate from the pattern outlined by Peter Reynolds in an essay entitled 'Unlocking the Box: Shakespeare on Film and Video':

watching Shakespeare on television or on film is a valuable but under-used alternative to reading him on the page. It does not *replace* the act of reading, but is complementary to it, and deserves a commensurate degree of time and attention in the curriculum.

(Aers and Wheale 1991, 189-90)

Teachers employ many variations on this theme of using a filmed production as an adjunct or alternative to reading Shakespeare on the page, but nowhere does viewing a film constitute a form of analysis in its own right: some teachers begin by showing a film, as an introduction both to Shakespeare's language and to the narrative content of the play; others show the film in segments, in between episodes of reading in class, as a means of clarifying details of plot and character; others show the film after the project of reading the written text is completed, in order to consolidate the work of reading. In these varying patterns, the film is used to provide a context or a structure for students' reading of the play.

Other advantages of using film in this way, as teachers and commentators observe, include the potential for film to capture students' attention and interest, and to make Shakespeare appear, in their eyes, worth the trouble of studying, especially if watching the film introduces the factor of enjoyment. Film is also considered to be particularly useful for reaching less able students. There is a general belief that

hearing the language spoken enables students to better understand it when they encounter it on the page, though, as Leach observes, '[s]tudents when asked what they have understood from seeing the video reply with a range of responses, from "didn't understand a word of it", to "understood the story a bit"' (70). Film is also considered valuable for students in that, as a record of a performance, it reinvests the play in its original context as drama, and enables the action to exist in (pseudo-)three-dimensional space.

While film is used initially and primarily as a means of reinforcing the process of reading the written text, it is also used to introduce the concept of interpretation. Many teachers choose to show more than one film version of the play being studied, which demonstrates to students that the plays are open to multiple interpretations. Comparison of the two films is usually carried out with close reference to the written text of the play, and the films are considered and compared according to how they translate the words on the page into images on the screen: as Reynolds asserts,

performances of Shakespeare recorded on film/video can provide a stimulus to discussion, and therefore to good teaching, by continually challenging students to make their own connections between the words on the page and the images on the screen Watching Shakespeare re-produced can stimulate active reading, both of the images on the screen and of those conjured in the theatre of the mind's eye, and can produce a productive debate concerning, amongst other things, textual fidelity and the construction of meanings.

(Aers and Wheale 1991, 190)

It is, however, important to note the provisional nature of Reynolds's description of the use of film: 'Watching Shakespeare re-produced *can* stimulate active reading ...

and *can* produce a productive debate' (my italics). That film has the potential to stimulate active reading and produce debate does not guarantee that showing a film in class will lead to either. What is more, the kind of work involved in analysing the interaction between 'words on the page and images on the screen', as Reynolds puts it, seems to belong to the more bookish style of Shakespeare-on-film work: what lines are cut and how does the film-maker replace the language with images? Do Shakespeare's poetry and the film's imagery ever perform the same connotative or denotative function? Does the visual content of the film *modify* Shakespeare's text and if so, in what ways? Is this successful or unsuccessful? As Leach argues,

this is to attempt to treat the television text in the same way as the printed text has been treated, that is, from the standpoint that there is a reality which it is 'about', that it refers to transcendental truths and 'human values', that the play is a discrete entity, complete and whole unto itself, and that by reading, studying and then seeing the video of it we can somehow grasp that inherent meaning and confirm the intentions of the playwright.

(69)

Nor should Shakespearean film be regarded merely as a visual conveyor of narrative material or an aural echo of the words on the page: even to consider it as a portable performance of a text originally written for dramatic interpretation is, in my opinion, to restrict the potential for reading these texts as sites of competing and complementary systems for the construction and play of meaning. What is needed in the use of Shakespearean film is a move from debates about 'textual fidelity', as Reynolds puts it, and towards a consideration of the 'construction of meanings'.

Shakespeare on film has generated a considerable quantity of critical analysis and commentary in recent decades, and the teaching of Shakespeare has likewise been the

subject of a number of books as well as several specially dedicated issues of Shakespeare Quarterly. The question of teaching Shakespeare with film, however, has not received the degree of attention in print commensurate with the increasing prevalence of this pedagogical strategy in secondary and tertiary English departments. Many of the books about teaching Shakespeare produced in recent years include a chapter or sometimes two on the use of film and television versions of the plays, but most, like the example by Peter Reynolds from which I have quoted, fail to move far beyond the assertion that such filmic versions of Shakespeare may and should be used in the classroom, or, if they do, tend to represent fairly local and limited readings of particular plays.

Two articles published in Shakespeare Quarterly in 1995 represent both the limitations of certain examples of the use of Shakespearean film, and the radical potential of the resource. The first, by Michael J. Collins and entitled 'Using Films to Teach Shakespeare', begins by setting out the potential usefulness of Shakespeare on film 'to enable students to experience for themselves the openness of the plays to interpretation' (228). After encouraging students to experiment for themselves with variations in 'tones, movements, and gestures' (228) as they read through a passage of Shakespearean text, Collins has the class 'look at the corresponding parts of three or four films to discover how various actors have chosen to speak and act the lines' (229). If his methods are successful, Collins summarises,

students come away from it feeling more confident about their abilities to understand the meaning and theatrical implications of Shakespeare's language and possessing a more precise and earned sense of the interpretive possibilities

of a script and of the ways in which those possibilities are both limited and realized onstage.

(229)

While there is nothing wrong with such an approach within its own parameters, it reduces the film text to nothing more than an apparently three-dimensional record of a particular performance. Collins's suggested use of contemporary Hollywood films as a means of analysing certain notions of theme and genre is much more radical: he proposes, for instance, a comparison of the ending of Fatal Attraction (in which the villain needs to be killed not once but twice) with the (non-)ending of Shakespeare's King Lear, which provides 'a useful way to make intelligible to students, through their own experience of it, an effect in King Lear that depends on some earned sensitivity to the form and conventions of Shakespeare's tragedy' (230). He similarly employs romantic comedies such as Sabrina, When Harry Met Sally, and Pretty Woman to 'illustrate in a contemporary idiom the conventions of Shakespeare's comedies' (230). Contemporary popular films such as Batman and The Godfather help students to analyse and examine 'the theatrical power and ... the attraction, the appeal of evil' in characters such as Macbeth, Iago, Edmund and Richard III (231). Yet Collins concludes disappointingly by asserting that '[h]elping students to see the power of Shakespeare's plays to evoke complex feelings seems to me an important goal' (232), which, in my view, resorts to the 'relevance' paradigm and a reliance on Shakespeare's 'genius', thus diverting attention away from the notion of reading Shakespeare as a process of the construction of meaning.

Stephen M. Buhler's suggestions for teaching Shakespeare with film are predicated on a much more comprehensive form of filmic analysis. Like Collins, he observes that the comparison of alternative versions of the same play 'alert[s] students to the range

of interpretive opportunities offered by a Shakespeare playtext' and 'exorcises the goblins of definitive Shakespeare performance and definitive Shakespeare reading, both of which can seriously curtail the discovery of meaning in the plays' (236). But his account of student responses to comparative viewing of Olivier's and Branagh's films of Henry V includes a consideration of matters beyond the actors' varying performances of certain lines and speeches. Buhler advocates 'placing screenplays under the same scrutiny as playtexts' (237), and instructs students to make observations when viewing a film under the headings of design, casting, sound, texts (or textual editing), camera, characterisation, physical and emotional movement, and 'overall impression' (239). This approach involves an analysis of film texts which takes into account the particular features of filmic construction, and Buhler's discussion of his students' comments on the two films demonstrates an awareness of the cultural as well as the textual meanings in which they deal.

In 2000 Deborah Cartmell published Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen, a monograph based on the author's own teaching practice and proposing the deployment of Shakespeare on film in the service of a Shakespearean pedagogy exploring such matters as gender, sexuality, nationhood, race, and ideology. While the overall trajectory of Cartmell's project is very much in accord with that of my own, I found her analysis and the examples of student exercises listed in the appendix to be ultimately conservative in their attitude towards the Shakespearean text. For instance, there is a question which asks students to 'Choose a critical book or essay on one of Shakespeare's plays and compare it to a scene/sequence from the same play on screen (produced in the same period, that is, within six years). Discuss the ideological assumptions underlying the critics' account and the director's version of the play'

(114). This question usefully encourages students to analyse a Shakespearean film, like published criticism, as a reading produced within a certain critical and socio-cultural climate, but both the examples of student responses to this question and Cartmell's own comments on those responses betray an implicit reliance on the adaptation paradigm, which is itself predicated on an underlying belief in the pre-existing unified Shakespearean text.

The exercise that requires students to 'Compare and contrast representations of sexuality in one play by Shakespeare with a film/televisual adaptation of the same text' (118) likewise ties the student to the adaptation model by asking them to 'compare and contrast' the film and the play; while one of the student responses excitingly discusses Branagh's Henry V in the context of the homosocial interrogations of the 'buddy' war film, analysing the visual and aural effects of the battle scenes in terms of phallic imagery, Cartmell criticises this effort for failing to discuss 'interpolations to the text', and, ultimately, for deviating from the 'compare and contrast' pattern (131). She similarly criticises an essay comparing Olivier's and Branagh's films of Henry V (in a response to a 'compare and contrast' question on nationality) for failing to recognise 'the obvious point that camera angles and the Battle of Agincourt itself are *additions* to Shakespeare's text' (132), and she refers to the filmic rendering of the Shakespearean text as 'the *imposition* of a meaning on to the text' (132, my italics).

Another exercise invites students to 'Imagine that you are directing a film version of one of [Shakespeare's plays]. Choose any scene and discuss how you would film it; including all the decisions made in converting the text to the screen' (127), and

Cartmell comments that the student who answered this topic ‘has [clearly] read and reread the play in a way which would suit contemporary tastes’ (133). This bland reference to ‘contemporary tastes’ to my mind completely overlooks the student’s powerful and compelling suggestion to present the scene on the heath in a modernised King Lear so that ‘[t]he “wilderness” which Lear is cast out into are the streets of London itself. Powerless amid so many people, Lear feels unknown, anonymous, until he goes insane’ (128). The replacement of the wild and barren heath of Shakespeare’s play with the crowded and impersonal streets of London has much less to do with the tastes of a contemporary audience, as Cartmell claims, and more to do with the student’s interest in circulating notions about the nature of subjectivity and community, both in the Shakespearean text and in contemporary culture. The main failing of Cartmell’s approach is the lack of recognition that the play and the film are both constructed texts, regarding the Shakespearean film instead as a construction which ‘imposes’ a meaning on the supposedly coherent, unified, and fixed Shakespeare play.

Leach warns that

unless we know ... how to help reveal to students that both the printed and the televisual text are constructed things, which can be made to say what you, or I, want them to say, and which are often used both on television and in the theatre to refuse fundamental confrontation in favour of the bland sentimentality of ‘relevant to us now’, we shall only compound the general tendency. My own view of using video in the classroom is that unless teachers ... have a grasp of the way television works, have the time to examine it closely, and are prepared to enable their students to make productive comparisons between printed and visual texts, then it is best avoided An inability to use those televisual texts in radical ways, along with a failure to understand the particular codes by which

they are working, results in the whole unsatisfactory nature of the undertaking which is emphasized by the disillusion with Shakespeare exhibited by many students.

(70-1)

It will be my objective in this thesis to suggest some ways in which Shakespeare film may be used in 'radical ways', employing methods which are founded upon an understanding of the 'particular codes' of the filmic text. I concur with John Frow's insistence that 'Shakespearean texts have only uses, not inherent meanings and functions' (Mead and Campbell, 216), and the chapters which follow will propose some uses for filmic Shakespearean texts, not only in relation to 'the Shakespeare play' as it is commonly conceived of in education, but also in the service of recent modes of literary and critical theory, which have to date had little application in the secondary English classroom in this country, particularly in the teaching of Shakespeare. I plan to begin not with 'the play', but with theoretical frameworks and pedagogical goals, and to expand on these in relation to the study of the Shakespearean text (whether that be the play text, a film or a paraphrase), through the primary vehicle of the Shakespearean film. I will use the term 'Shakespearean film' throughout to refer to filmic adaptations of the plays, in which the play text in a complete, abbreviated or reordered form comprises the film's screenplay, as well as to films which deal with Shakespeare as an historical figure or with the cultural figuration of the plays, such as Shakespeare in Love, Looking for Richard, and In the Bleak Midwinter.

In Chapters Two and Three I will explore some of the ways in which the use of film may activate an examination of the role of the three language strands in the construction of a text, and of the ways in which written, oral, and visual language

function independently and corporately to construct and convey meaning. Chapter Two will comprise a predominantly descriptive account of the function and interaction of the three language strands in several short excerpts from Shakespearean films, while Chapter Three takes as its focus the analysis of visual language. Then, in the latter part of this thesis, I will employ Shakespearean film to introduce some modes of literary and critical theory which I consider to be both amenable to and useful for the study of Shakespeare in the classroom. Chapter Four takes as its starting place the emphasis placed by English in the New Zealand Curriculum and the University and Entrance and Bursaries examination on the question of response to text, and considers several manifestations and possible applications of Reader-Response theory through a reading of three films of Hamlet. Chapter Five uses English in the New Zealand Curriculum's concern with issues of gender as a springboard for the discussion of feminist criticism and gender studies, based on the analysis of the filmic portrayals of Gertrude and Ophelia. The thesis will then conclude with an account of the project of Cultural Studies, and an examination and application of two of its primary concerns in the final chapters. Chapter Six will address questions of Shakespeare's cultural currency through an examination of theories of elite and popular culture, analysing the ways in which two recent mainstream Hollywood films deal with Shakespeare's perceived cultural significance. Chapter Seven is concerned with the questions of cultural populism and the nature of the culture industry, addressing them by means of a discussion of what is arguably the most famous Shakespeare film of the last decade, Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet.

¹ Since the appointment of Dr Judith Aitken in 1991, ERO has had two distinct functions involving separate reforms: the first is the assurance audit, to ensure that schools are fulfilling the government's mandate in terms of education; and the second is the effectiveness review, which focuses on students and their achievement.

² I will include the date of publication in the references in this chapter in order to give an historical context for the process of reform and the academic discourse which surrounded it. In later chapters I will include dates of publication only where more than one text by that author is cited in this thesis.

³ During goes on to describe how

Thatcherism [or the new right] contains an internal contradiction – between its economic rationalism and its consensual cultural nationalism. The more the market is freed from state intervention and trade and finance cross national boundaries, the more the nation will be exposed to foreign influences and the greater the gap between rich and poor. Thatcherite appeals to popular values can be seen as an attempt to overcome this tension. In particular, the new right gives the family extraordinary value and aura In the same way, a homogeneous image of national culture is celebrated and enforced to counter the dangers posed by the increasingly global nature of economic exchanges and widening national economic divisions. The new right image of a monoculture and hard-working family life, organized through traditional gender roles, requires a devaluation not just of other nations and their cultural identities but of 'enemies within': those who are 'other' racially, sexually, intellectually.

(14)

⁴ This form of assessment has been central to the debate surrounding and implementation of national qualifications in a number of countries, including Australia and Great Britain.

⁵ The debate concerning assessment is significantly broader than my cursory remarks indicate; for more detail see Carter and O'Neill (1995), Peddie and Tuck (1995), and Stoop (1998).

⁶ The debate surrounding unit standards has been fraught with controversy and opposition; for more detail see those authors listed in note 5.

⁷ Graham Stoop's excellent account of the history and development of the English Curriculum in New Zealand since 1969 explains in detail the factors involved in effecting this failure to achieve more far-reaching reform.

⁸ I am indebted to Graham Stoop for the lucid and informative account of this process given in his thesis, The Management of Knowledge, which I have recounted in a much abbreviated form.

⁹ According to Stoop, theorists of the 'Growth Model' placed an emphasis on language, especially the student's own experience of language, rather than an adherence to a language circumscribed by cultural forms. Stoop's use of the term 'outcomes-based model' refers to the perceived influence of market forces and expectations on the drafting of the English curriculum.

¹⁰ For discussion and advocacy of oral and visual language, see Wilkinson (1965) and Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson (1973).

¹¹ Information currently available on Achievement 2001 suggests that the emphasis is largely on the structure of assessment and the various means of earning qualifications and credit, rather than on such details as set texts and compulsory elements of study. Moreover, the programme is now entitled Achievement 2002, because of delays to its implementation date.

¹² We may also discern significant points of intersection between Cox's attitudes towards Shakespeare, and Brasch's unashamed and unqualified bard-worship, particularly in terms of the perceived interrelationship between Shakespeare and the English language, and of the implication in both statements that the works of Shakespeare have some sort of transcendent power or 'wisdom', the influence of which will change humankind for the better.

¹³ Witi Ihimaera, Ian Mune, Oscar Kightly, and Christian Penney. 'Shakespeare in the Pacific.' (Panel discussion at Dislocating Shakespeare, the Biennial Conference of the Australia New Zealand Shakespeare Association, 9 July 2000).

¹⁴ See note 12.

¹⁵ See note 12.

¹⁶ Penney cites an example the Theatre at Large production of King Lear in 1997 in which Lear was played by a pakeha actor and his daughter Cordelia by a Maori actress. In fact this production made no other reference to its New Zealand context in terms of casting or production design.

¹⁷ By comparison, Hornbrook observes of the British system that ‘The questions that are set require for literature familiar O-level-type answers: on, for example, the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth or the qualities of kingship; and for Drama ideas for costumes or advice for actors’ (Holderness, 147). Alan Sinfield similarly argues that literature exam questions on Shakespeare in Britain

[a]lmost invariably [assume] that the plays reveal universal ‘human’ values and qualities and that they are self-contained and coherent entities The appeal to absolute values and qualities is ubiquitous Women, of course, are a special category within the universal In the examination questions almost no reference is made to the diverse forms which the play has taken and may take Even the occasional question about staging is liable to involve the assumption that there is a true reading behind the diverse possibilities That the text is to be regarded as coherent, either in terms of action or of dramatic effect, is frequently insisted upon.

(Dollimore and Sinfield, 138-9)

¹⁸ As I noted above, while Shakespeare will continue to be assessed under the new assessment structure being developed as Achievement 2002, it seems certain to lose its compulsory status.

¹⁹ It is interesting that, in the explanation of the achievement standard, ‘Shakespearean drama’ becomes ‘Shakespearean text’. Does this mean that students may also be able to discuss one of Shakespeare’s sonnets, or a film of Shakespeare, or an adaptation of Shakespeare like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead or the locally produced Romeo and Tusi?

²⁰ Throughout her discussion Leach refers to ‘television’ or ‘televisual’ texts, which I assume relates to the fact that films used in the classroom will, for the most part, be on video tape and therefore shown in television format regardless of whether they were initially produced for cinematic or televised release. Thus I do not take her references to televisual texts to mean solely those Shakespearean adaptations, such as the BBC/Time Life series, made specifically for television.

Chapter 2

Negotiating the Language Strands: Shakespeare on Page, Stage, and Screen

The ability to use spoken and written language effectively, to read and to listen, and to discern critically messages from television, film, the computer, and other visual media is fundamental both to learning and to effective participation in society and the work-force.

(The New Zealand Curriculum Framework, 10)

The English curriculum encourages the use of a full range of texts representing a wide variety of language functions Students will extend their ability to discriminate and to understand text through close reading and through exploring and analysing the effects of words, conventions, structures, techniques, and images Students should understand that each text reflects a particular viewpoint and a set of values which are shaped by its social or historical context.

(Ministry of Education 1994, 16)

The objective of this chapter is to suggest some ways in which Shakespearean film may serve as a resource for the introduction of a programme of study which activates English in the New Zealand Curriculum's groundbreaking tripartite structure around the three language strands of written, oral and visual language. The close reading of short excerpts from Shakespearean films can serve to enable students to identify and analyse the functions of the individual language strands and the effects of their interaction in various combinations in the construction and communication of

meaning. Moreover it is my contention that the use of this language-based structure in reading Shakespeare will provide students and teachers with valuable and perhaps hitherto untapped skills and strategies for developing a Shakespearean pedagogy that moves beyond the liberal humanist paradigm and its emphasis on the identification of certain themes and character traits which are fixed and exist before the act of reading. I will begin by laying some theoretical and pedagogical groundwork for English in the New Zealand Curriculum's use of the language strands, and then proceed with some examples of the kind of method I am proposing.

As I discussed in Chapter One, English in the New Zealand Curriculum sets out the achievement objectives for English across three strands of language use which it defines as oral language, written language, and visual language; these three strands derive from 'the knowledge and understanding outlined in The New Zealand Curriculum Framework for the essential learning area Language and Languages' (Ministry of Education 1994, 19). Each strand is divided into two components, a reception and a production component: oral language is divided into listening and speaking, written language into reading and writing, and visual language into viewing and presenting. For each of these components a number of functions is designated, for instance, the listening functions are interpersonal listening and listening to texts, while the writing functions are expressive writing, poetic writing, and transactional writing. Moreover, there are three processes which are common to each language strand, exploring language, thinking critically, and processing information.

The curriculum document gives the following explanation for its structure:

Drawing on contemporary research and successful teaching practice, [English in the New Zealand Curriculum] defines the English language skills which students will need to participate fully in New Zealand society and in the international community. Seeking to develop high levels of literacy, the English curriculum therefore establishes language aims for the three 'strands' – oral, written, and visual language.

(Ministry of Education 1994, 6)

It is detrimental to the authority of this document that it does not cite, make reference to, or even name the sources of the 'contemporary research' on which it is based. What is more, the curriculum betrays a far-reaching reliance on a relatively discrete body of terminology which it fails adequately to define: the difference between a function and a process, for instance, is not explained or illustrated, nor is it made clear exactly what constitutes thinking and discerning 'critically'. Thus, while the curriculum provides a logical structure for and a ground-breaking approach to a fruitful programme of language study, its reliance on undefined terminology to express its intentions must create obstacles to its effective implementation in the classroom.

The emphasis which English in the New Zealand Curriculum places on the division of language into three strands and on the importance of placing those three strands on an equal footing is not unprecedented in critical writing and discussion concerning the teaching of language. The work of British educators Leslie Stratta, John Dixon, and Andrew Wilkinson on oral language in many ways anticipates English in the New Zealand Curriculum, and may provide the source for the reception/production division:

A teacher of English starts from words and experiences, and a special interest in the dynamic relationship between them. He [sic] can look at this process from two points of view. Firstly, it is concerned with *producing* language, both talking and writing; putting into words, and shaping understanding by means of words, our reactions to experiences within and outside us. This we might call *the verbalization of experience*. Secondly, it is concerned with *receiving* language, both listening and reading; making sense of the words of others and understanding them in their context. This we might call *the experience of verbalization*, of what others have verbalized.

(Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson, xi, authors' emphases)¹

Andrew Wilkinson's Spoken English, published in 1965, insists on the importance of oral language in English courses. Wilkinson himself writes that 'in education we tend to talk of the spoken language as if it were a poor relation of the written, and to talk of it, often enough, in literary terms' (Wilkinson, 31), while Alan Davies asserts that '[a]n educated person should be numerate, orate, and literate. These are the NOL skills; NOL are to our age what the three Rs were to the nineteenth century, fundamental objects of educational achievement' (Wilkinson, 11). Moreover, Wilkinson claims that '[o]racy is not a "subject" – it is a condition of learning in all subjects' (Wilkinson, 58). English in the New Zealand Curriculum asserts in similar terms that '[l]istening and speaking are essential for language development, for learning, for relating to others, and for living successfully in society' (Ministry of Education 1994, 27).

There is less of a precedent for English in the New Zealand Curriculum's attention to the study and teaching of visual language, although one of the primary goals of the Dartmouth Conference of 1966, which, as I discussed in Chapter One, had a significant influence on New Zealand educators and on curriculum development, was a greater emphasis on the audio-visual media.² English in the New Zealand

Curriculum argues persuasively for the necessity of visual language's inclusion alongside written and oral language:

Our language environment is rich in signs, symbols, and other forms of visual language in which words and images interact. On the page, on the stage, on television, and on the computer screen, visual and verbal elements are combined in increasingly global systems of communication.

(Ministry of Education 1994, 39)

However, the visual language strand is clearly the least theorised of the three in terms of its definition and its development into areas of teaching and learning. While each of the other strands is divided into two sub-strands, and those into two or three different functions, the visual strand is separated only into the sub-strands of viewing and presenting; there is no development into different forms of viewing and presenting, such as the viewing or presentation of audio-visual texts, live theatrical texts, or static images, in the way in which the written language strand, for example, differentiates between personal reading and close reading. Moreover, the curriculum states specifically that it is only concerned with visual texts that incorporate verbal language: 'students should analyse contrasting texts, evaluating the ways verbal and visual language features are organised and combined for different meanings, effects, purposes, and audiences in different social contexts' (Ministry of Education 1994, 120). For these reasons, the potential for using Shakespearean film in the teaching and study of the visual language strand is particularly great, although there are equal possibilities for the exploration of the functions of written and oral language as well, as it will be the purpose of this chapter to illustrate.

Shakespearean films are all but custom-built sites for exploring the characteristics and functions of and the interaction between the three language strands: besides being

audio-visual texts and therefore incorporating the oral and visual strands, they permit the incorporation of the written strand by bringing to the study of a film the awareness that, as Douglas Lanier puts it, ‘for us, Shakespeare has become his book’ (Shaughnessy, 175). What is more, several contemporary Shakespearean films such as Kenneth Branagh’s Much Ado About Nothing and Baz Luhrmann’s William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet acknowledge the omnipresence of the Shakespearean book by visually incorporating passages of written text. Other films, including Branagh’s 1989 version of Henry V and the recent Hollywood blockbuster and Academy Award winner, Shakespeare in Love, address the questions of the parallel existence of Shakespeare’s dramatic texts in the theatre and on film, and of the relationship between these two media. Such films represent rich and detailed sites of interaction between written, oral, and visual language, and their negotiation of Shakespeare’s various manifestations as book, as theatre, and as film means they may also be usefully read as complex explorations of the multifaceted nature of Shakespeare as a cultural artefact.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum is not unaware of the potential usefulness of Shakespeare on film, and it offers the following Teaching and Learning Example in the context of ‘studying a play by, for example, Shakespeare’:

Achievement Objectives

Listening to texts: thinking critically; exploring language

Teaching and Learning

- Students listen to and view the scene from a film version of the play
- In groups, students discuss the characterisation, mood, and historical setting achieved by the actor and director, identifying verbal and

visual language features which communicate their interpretations. They report their findings to the class.

- Students hear or watch and discuss another recorded or film version of the same scene. In pairs, they evaluate this interpretation of the scene and compare their response to it with their responses to the other versions.

(Ministry of Education 1994, 57)

This example, while insufficiently detailed, explicated, and theorised, nevertheless describes a basic model for using Shakespearean film in the classroom to which many teachers already subscribe. The rest of this chapter will comprise a series of close reading exercises, using short extracts from recent Shakespearean films, which aim to realise the formula given above, but also to extend the scope of the model beyond ‘characterisation, mood, and historical setting’. I should explain at the outset that the exercise of reading Shakespeare on film will necessarily be concerned primarily with the reception rather than the production components of the strands, and it will be my intention in this and later chapters to concentrate on ways of reading Shakespearean film rather than to propose methods of assessment.

Kenneth Branagh’s Much Ado About Nothing (1993) begins with a long introductory sequence which comprehensively introduces the matter, style, and tone of the film, and establishes the context in which Shakespeare’s text will be read and played out. Part of the extended exposition is a long sequence featuring the arrival of Don Pedro and his soldiers and the excited preparations of Leonato’s household, which ends as the two parties meet and Don Pedro asks: ‘Good Signior Leonato, are you come to meet your trouble?’ (1.1.80). There is a great deal of energy and hilarity in this passage, all is sunshine, good humour, and virile and voluptuous young bodies are amply displayed in the bathing scenes. However, within this exposition is a

shorter sequence which represents a more concentrated introduction to the world of film, and upon which the longer exposition is largely an elaboration. Branagh borrows the song from 2.3 of the play and gives it to Beatrice to read as a poem, prologue-like, at the very beginning of the film. As she reads the first stanza, the words appear in white on a black screen, which marks the transition from Shakespeare as written text to Shakespeare as performance, and deliberately acknowledges the former as it moves into the latter: Lanier refers to this as ‘the burden of the book’ (Shaughnessy, 178). This opening sequence has important implications for Shakespeare in the classroom, and may be powerfully deployed for the application of the three strands of language, as well as to introduce new and fruitful methods of approaching the study of Shakespeare. English in the New Zealand Curriculum insists that, ‘[a]lthough the strands of oral, written, and visual language are set out separately in this curriculum statement, in practice they will be interwoven,’ and a filmic passage such as the prologue to Much Ado About Nothing presents an opportunity for teachers to fulfil the curriculum’s requirement that ‘English programmes should ensure that students’ experience of language is coherent and enriched through all three strands’ (Ministry of Education 1994, 19). I propose to begin an analysis of this filmic text by considering each of the language strands in turn, and then the points of transition or sites of negotiation between them.

The passage which appears on the screen is as follows:

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Then sigh not so, but let them go,
 And be you blithe and bonny,
 Converting all your sounds of woe
 Into hey nonny, nonny!

(2.3.63-70)³

Beginning the film with written language (and specifically a passage which is in verse and which contains a series of archaisms and typically 'Shakespearean' expressions, features which tend to be associated with the difficulty of reading Shakespeare's language) serves to acknowledge the fact that almost anyone educated in the West will have come across the Shakespearean book at some stage: after all, Beatrice is later shown to be reading this passage from a book. It also functions to help the film's audience ease into the Shakespearean idiom: in the introduction to the screenplay of the film, Branagh writes that

[t]he idea of seeing the words and hearing them spoken right at the beginning of the film was a deliberate attempt to show how they could be dramatic in themselves. It allows the audience to 'tune in' to the new language they are about to experience and to realise ... that they will easily understand the simplicity, gravity, and beauty of the song lyrics.

(1993, xiv)

Beyond its usefulness as a nod to Shakespeare's status in educational institutions, and as a tool for audience comprehension, this passage also serves narrative and thematic functions which may be revealed through the application of the skills of close reading associated with the analysis of written language.⁴ A close reading of this passage might begin with a discussion of the theme of inconstancy in love, particularly the inconstancy of men. This beginning is not wholly inappropriate to a play whose plot traces the development of two romantic relationships, and in which the inconstancy of one lover, Claudio, precipitates the dramatic crisis. The villain of the play, Don John,

is the prime exemplum of Beatrice's allegation that '[m]en were deceivers ever', and his covert machinations cause the complications in the plot by encouraging Claudio's inconstancy. The reference to men having '[o]ne foot in sea, and one on shore' also prepares the viewer for the imminent return from war of the men in the play. But when read in terms of the social context which produced this play, these lines might also lead the reader to compare the freedom to roam of the men in the play with the immobility of the women, who have no choice but to 'let them go'. This passage characterises men as active while women are represented as passive and dominated by their feelings: they 'sigh', make 'sounds of woe', and have no recourse to misfortune but to be 'blithe and bonny.' We might equally, however, read these lines as an injunction to women to be independent and emotionally self-sufficient, and to create their own happiness. Such a reading is appropriate to a play in which both women and men are active in the project of playing Cupid.

Giving these lines to Beatrice is also a function of her characterisation in the film. Leonato says of Beatrice that 'she is never sad but when she sleeps, and not ever sad then' (2.1.310), while Beatrice herself admits she was 'born to speak all mirth and no matter' (2.1.297). We learn that there has been some sort of romance between Beatrice and Benedick prior to the events of the play, the demise of which seems to have been the fault of the gentleman, since Beatrice says to him: 'You always end with a jade's trick. I know you of old' (1.1.123-4). Thus, for Beatrice to insist that '[m]en were deceivers ever' seems appropriate, as does her injunction to counter men's inconstancy with mirth.

As I noted above, the strategy of accompanying the appearance of the opening lines of the film on the screen with their recitation in voice-over means that Shakespeare's lines are shown to exist simultaneously as written and as oral language. This passage therefore allows the student to put into practice the skills associated with the listening function of the oral language strand. First of all, we might consider the characteristics of the delivery of the lines by Emma Thompson's Beatrice. She speaks softly, sometimes in a half-whisper, and this creates a sense of intimacy between character and audience: Beatrice invites us to identify with her, offering to share with us her insight. The delivery of the line 'To one thing constant never' suggests danger tempered with humour, and the first hint of Beatrice's characteristic irony may be detected in the intonation of her 'never.' In contrast, the words 'let them go' are uttered with a certain wistfulness which indicates something beyond mirth and a disposition to irony. These observations bear some clear connections with those arising from our close reading of the written text of this passage, and in this way it becomes evident that this passage may serve as a site of negotiation and interaction between written language and oral language.

In the second part of the prologue it is revealed that Beatrice is reading the poem to a group from Leonato's household who are having a picnic. As she reads the second stanza of the poem to the company, the camera pans over her audience, allowing their delighted responses to serve as a cue for ours, and making it possible for us to analyse Beatrice's performance in terms of her audience within the film as well as in the context of the film as a whole. The purpose of Beatrice's oral text is to entertain her immediate audience, the company from Leonato's household, and it could be argued that the message of her discourse comprises a lighthearted but earnest warning to the

ladies in her audience about the inconstancy of men: as noted above, Beatrice once lost her heart to Benedick. The purpose of this speech in the wider context of the film, as we have partially deduced, is to introduce us to the character of Beatrice, to establish a connection and a sympathy between her and the audience of the film, and to introduce the major thematic concern of the film, the trials of love and the inequality of the sexes. The tone of the oral text is, as established in our analysis of Thompson's delivery, at once merry and a little sinister, ironic but wistful, and the audiences of both Beatrice and Thompson may appreciate this.

Finally, we come to the third language strand, the visual. Following the sequence of legends with which the film begins, the first actual frame is entirely filled with a painting of Leonato's villa, from which the camera pans to reveal its subject. Entering the world of a film via a painting, a transition from one art form to another, serves as a reminder of the transition from written text to film, and also of the implied transition from written text to theatrical performance, and from theatrical performance to film: as Lanier argues, both the painting and the written text of the poem serve 'to signal the subordination of a static artifact – the text, a painting – to its living enactment in the film' (Shaughnessy, 178). This example represents another point of transition and negotiation, and might serve as an illustration of the play's multiple and interpretative existence, as well as allowing teachers and students to consider the interaction of the three language strands.

The scene laid before us as Beatrice reads the second stanza of 'Sigh no more, ladies' is a rustic picnic in the Tuscan sunshine. Members of Leonato's household lounge on the grass, listening delightedly to the performance. There is an abundance

of every good thing: grapes, tomatoes, bread, cheese, and flagons of wine: what Branagh's screenplay refers to as a 'self-contained rural Italian paradise' (1993, 5). There are a number of purely visual features of this sequence which merit discussion. We may begin by enumerating these features, before relating them to the written and spoken content of the scene. First of all, the physical setting is unrelentingly positive: beautiful countryside, glorious weather, and food, wine, and fellowship. The good vibrations are almost tangible. The company are arrayed in simple garb in earth tones and white, which suggests both the simplicity of this great household, and their affinity with their natural surroundings.

It is pertinent to observe, however, that while the women are dressed predominantly in virginal white, their necklines, by contrast, are low, revealing ample quantities of cleavage. In this way, the women are sexualised, but the portrayal of their sexuality is conflicted, as the white-gowned maid competes with the voluptuous woman. The camera's treatment of Beatrice is similarly sexualised, showing us first her bare foot, travelling slowly up her shapely brown leg and taking in her tanned bosom before coming to rest on her face. The depiction of the men in this scene is simpler, although Hugh Oatcake has taken his shirt off. (Later in the exposition the men of Don Pedro's company are given a similarly sexualised portrayal, although their sexuality is portrayed as straightforwardly virile and masculine, without the contradiction to which the women are subject). An examination of the language of the camera will also reveal that this sequence is filmed in a single long shot, panning lingeringly over the company before finally revealing Beatrice, which serves to build suspense, and to tantalise the viewer by withholding what we most want to see – the face of the speaker.

The broad good humour of the opening of this film, the rural and nature-loving setting, the simplicity of the characters and their lives, and the sensuality of the women are all established solely through visual signifiers, which exposes the shortsightedness of English in the New Zealand Curriculum's emphasis on studying only 'the effects of combining verbal and visual features' (Ministry of Education 1994, 120). Nevertheless a consideration of the meanings and effects produced by the interrelation between verbal and visual language in this prologue will be equally fruitful. Firstly, we may detect a clear relationship between the account given of women in 'Sigh no more, ladies' and their visual portrayal. The women are presented as ripe for love, as it were, in their low-cut bodices, but the conflict between the white of their dresses and the display of their bosoms recalls the virgin-whore dichotomy which circulated freely in Elizabethan discursive practice, and which was often the justification for the mistreatment or abandonment of women. We may relate this to the inequality of the sexes as conveyed in Beatrice's poem by the relative activity of the men and passivity of the women. This notion of sexual difference is further heightened later in the exposition by the raw physicality and sheer force of the soldiers' arrival from the wars, spurring on their horses and raising their fists in victory. The women in the prologue are indeed 'blithe and bonny', and all but breathless with excitement at the news of the imminent arrival of the men: the wistfulness in Beatrice's voice as she tells us that '[m]en were deceivers ever' is our only clue that these women may soon have cause to make 'sounds of woe'.

A second aspect of the combination of verbal and visual features in this prologue is the tension created between the peace and happiness enjoyed by the members of

Leonato's household and the sinister portents of Beatrice's poem. Don Pedro's company is returning from war, and, although casualties were few and Don Pedro was victorious, the implied contrast between the horrors of war and the pleasures of a picnic is an important one. Moreover, in the light of the implications of the assertion that '[m]en were deceivers ever' for the evolution of the plot, the idyllic opening moments of the film provide a platform from which events may, and do, take a turn for the worse. But Beatrice enjoins her audience to turn all their 'sounds of woe' into 'hey nonny nonny', reminding us of the generic characteristics of a Shakespearean comedy which may descend from joy into woe, but never fails to end with celebration.

Finally, we may consider the significance of the single pan shot used in this scene, which is uninterrupted by cuts from one angle to another. An attentive student of Branagh's film work would recognise this technique as a characteristic of his Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean films.⁵ It is also possible to draw a parallel between the scene of unity and harmony presented to us and the fluid, unbroken camera work employed to present it. Finally, Branagh's camera offers the viewer the kind of intimacy which Beatrice's voice invites in the first seconds of the film by minimising the viewer's awareness of its agency and authority, whereas in a film such as Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, for example, the camera serves to draw attention to the artifice of the medium by its rapid movements and unusual angles.

Using the opening sequence of Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet alongside the example from Branagh's film discussed above will allow teachers to

implement the curriculum's injunction that students consider 'contrasting texts from a wide range of genre, traditions, and periods' (Ministry of Education 1994, 88). Moreover, the opening of this film employs a similar technique to that demonstrated in the Branagh film, and the significant stylistic differences of Luhrmann's film should offer an equal challenge to students' skills in reading written, oral, and visual language. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet comes conveniently equipped with a prologue to Act 1, removing the necessity for Luhrmann to improvise one as Branagh does. This prologue recounts the events of the play far more specifically than 'Sigh no more, ladies' describes the plot of Much Ado About Nothing, although both texts are employed suggestively:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
 In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes,
 A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,
 Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
 Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
 Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
 The which, if you with patient ears attend,
 What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

(Prologue to Act 1, 1-14)

The filmic prologue of Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet consists of five distinct sections which may be analysed separately, and which combine to a

striking cinematic whole. It opens with a television set in the midst of a black screen, on which a news report is just beginning. As the camera slowly zooms in on the television set, the newsreader speaks the lines of the prologue to Act 1, excluding the final couplet. The story graphic for the report features the wedding ring given by Romeo to Juliet, and the title reads 'Star-cross'd lovers'. The second section establishes the setting of the film, cross-cutting shots of the city of Verona with a legend in white on a black screen reading, in the words of the prologue, 'In Fair Verona'. In the third section, Pete Postlethwaite, who plays Friar Lawrence, reads the prologue again in voice-over, up to the line 'A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life', while a montage of scenes of civil violence and police action, newspaper headings and magazine covers detailing the feud, and legends introduces us in vivid detail to the nature of the feud between the two houses. The fourth section introduces most of the main characters of the film, excluding the lovers, offering the viewer explanatory captions such as 'Mercutio, Romeo's best friend' and 'Captain Prince, Chief of Police' to accompany the visuals. The final section opens with a shot of Romeo entering Juliet's tomb, followed by legends of the first eight lines of the prologue in rapid succession and a montage of shots from throughout the film, which builds to a climax as the title of the film appears on the screen. The whole is accompanied by choral music, which James N. Loehlin describes as 'a pastiche of Orff's "O Fortuna" entitled "O Verona"' (Burnett and Wray, 125).

This sequence serves to introduce the viewer to the events and the characters of the film, but it also illustrates in vivid detail that this film is a site for competing audiovisual and written media in various modes. The use of the newsreader followed by a voice-over represents a negotiation between the oral forms of television and film;

the newspaper headings and filmic legends represent both the distinction between journalistic writing and literary writing, and that between written language in its own forms (newspapers, magazines, Shakespeare's plays), and the appropriation by television and film of written language (legends). The film considers the same relationship between written and audiovisual media considered by Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing as well as interrogating the relationship between television and film.⁶ What is more, one of the functions of this filmic prologue, and its apparently facile footnotes, is to negotiate the gap between Shakespeare's play and this film: Luhrmann's anchorwoman is the equivalent of Branagh's watercolour.

Rather than analysing this passage in terms of each of the language strands individually, it will be worthwhile to use the structure of the passage and analyse each of the five sections of the introduction in turn. There are several features of the first section involving the television newsreader which will be of interest in a study of the language strands. Firstly, as noted above, the television set appears inside the frame of the filmic image as the camera zooms slowly closer, and in this way, the medium of television is framed by the medium of film. It could be argued that this film is attempting to appropriate the televisual media, as it later appropriates the written media of newspapers and magazines, and as it is appropriating Shakespeare's text. It is worth noting at this point that several crucial scenes later in the film, including the death of Mercutio, are set within the proscenium of a ruined theatre, and in this way the film could be said to be appropriating the theatrical medium as well. As scholars of the audiovisual media have established, television finds its origins in radio, and therefore places a greater emphasis on the oral, whereas film is more closely allied to photography, and therefore its primary emphasis is visual. This will have implications

for any analysis of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, which could be said to prioritise the visual over the verbal, as is represented by its opening shot of a primarily visual medium framing and encapsulating a primarily aural one.

The mode of the televisual presentation of the prologue to Romeo and Juliet is also significant: the lines are spoken as a news report, and in this way the dramatic arts coincide with the journalistic media.⁷ This will be of interest in the context of the oral language strand, and we may consider the differences between the oral presentation of a fictional dramatic speech, written in rhyming verse, and that of a factual news report. While the purpose of both oral texts may be to convey information, the prologue to a play serves to establish for the audience a fictional world, while a news report endeavours to disseminate information about an actual world in which its audience lives and participates. A news reader is expected to maintain a certain neutrality of tone, whereas an actor performing a dramatic prologue will make a freer and more varied use of tone, in the context of the production of which his or her speech is a part. On the other hand, parallels may be drawn between the way in which both news reports and dramatic prologues are structured in order to release information in a certain fashion. Similarly both kinds of spoken text could be said to attempt to elicit emotional responses of some kind, whether of sadness, anger, empathy, or outrage, to any of which the events outlined in the prologue to Romeo and Juliet, as either dramatic speech or news report, might give rise. Diana Harris also observes that 'the news is being delivered in Elizabethan English, the unfamiliarity of which is diminished by twentieth century "newspeak" conventions of intonation, cadence and modulation' (184), which technique is in many ways similar to the 'tuning in' strategy of Branagh's opening of Much Ado About Nothing.

The second section of the prologue is primarily dedicated to introducing the physical world of the film, or the venue for the action. A legend in white letters on a black screen informs us that the story takes place 'In fair Verona', and in this way the film shows itself to be faithful to Shakespeare's play. However, the shots of Verona which accompany this legend suggest that 'fair' is perhaps not the most suitable adjective to apply to this densely packed metropolis of skyscrapers and tenement buildings (the film was shot in Mexico City). In this way the verbal and visual languages of the film combine to produce an irony that the verbal language alone does not contain. The movement of the camera is at all times rapid and violent, featuring high speed zoom shots, both in and out, and sweeping and disjointedly connected panning shots across the city. What is more, the camera is not always in focus, and in these various ways the camera draws attention to itself: the film is conscious of itself as a film, and highlights its own special qualities and abilities to present different kinds of visual images. The work of the camera also fulfils an important role in the way that we perceive 'fair Verona', and the visual and cinematic language of the film prepares the viewer for the violence and turbulence of the world we are about to enter.

The camera also draws the viewer's attention to a particular feature of Verona's skyline, a monumental statue of Christ. This introduces an important theme pertaining to the visual imagery of the film, the use of Roman Catholic iconography, and this short passage of film places great emphasis on the Christ by returning to it eight times in just a few seconds. Moreover, one of the shots of this monument places it between two large skyscrapers, one of which bears the name of Montague, the other Capulet. Not only does this shot establish that the cause of the feud between the

Montagues and the Capulets is corporate rivalry, but it places religion and specifically Roman Catholicism squarely at the heart of that feud, implying a Mafia element. It is significant that all this information is conveyed almost solely through visual language.

The third part of the film's introduction reintroduces oral language to the mix as the prologue is read again, this time in voice-over, and the features of this oral text may be fruitfully compared with the news report from the beginning of the film. The news reader's version is neutral and measured, while the voice-over is more impassioned and sombre. The specific features of the spoken texts which create this contrast are difficult to pin down, but could be discussed in terms of pace (the news anchor's reading is considerably faster than the voice-over) and of intonation or pitch (the voice-over is spoken in a generally low pitch with more subtle variances in intonation, while the news reader employs a broader range).⁸ During the voice-over the camera elaborates on the nature of the 'ancient grudge' which has broken to 'new mutiny'.

The debt to written language of the Shakespearean film genre is again acknowledged through the use of a series of newspaper headings which convey the centrality of the old quarrel to Verona's community: The Verona Beach Herald leads with 'Montague vs. Capulet' while Verona Today features the headline 'Ancient Grudge'; other headlines include 'New Mutiny' and 'Civil blood makes civil hands unclean'. A collection of prominent magazines entitled Timely, Bullet, and Prophesy also feature articles about the Montague-Capulet feud, suggesting that it has earned widespread attention.⁹ Both these forms of journalistic media hark back to the newsreader, and all serve to emphasise that this long-running family feud is big news. Combined with the newspaper and magazine articles is a series of raw, hard-hitting shots of civil unrest

and violence: a fire blazes out of control in the streets, a police helicopter buzzes over the city, frightened citizens flee through the city in search of safety, and overlooking it all is the character of the Prince, who becomes Captain Prince, Chief of Police (a later caption informs us of this fact). Finally, the camera introduces Lord and Lady Montague, and Lord and Lady Capulet, as the voice-over reaches the line: ‘from forth the fatal loins of these two foes ...’, and this section closes with the legend ‘a pair of star-cross’d lovers take their life’.

If the second and third sections of the introduction convey the bulk of their information through visual language, the fourth part makes extensive use of written language through the deployment of a series of captions introducing the characters. What is more, in introducing the major players, the film makes some embellishments on Shakespeare’s *dramatis personae*. Lord and Lady Capulet become the clearly Italianate Fulgencio and Gloria, while the Montagues receive the Kennedyesque appellations of Ted and Caroline. These characters are also identified as the parents of Romeo and Juliet. As noted above, Prince Escalus becomes Captain Prince, the Chief of Police in Verona, while Paris earns ‘Dave’ as a first name, and is identified as the Governor’s son. The importance of Paris’s social position in this world is meant as the equivalent of his being related to the Prince in Shakespeare’s play. The last character introduced is Mercutio, described as Romeo’s best friend. Both Prince and Mercutio are played by African Americans, which may be to signal that they too are related in Shakespeare’s version (3.1.142).¹⁰

There are several characters who are not introduced during this prologue, including Benvolio and Tybalt, both of whom are introduced with captions in the first scene of

the film, but more significantly, the eponymous lovers do not feature. However, the fifth section of the filmic prologue begins with the shot of Romeo entering Juliet's tomb from later in the film. This is followed by the third appearance of the first eight lines of Shakespeare's prologue, this time as a series of legends. Thus the text of the prologue appears in this filmic prologue as audio-visual language (the news reader), as spoken language (the voice-over), and as written language (the legends). The sequence of legends precedes a montage of shots from throughout the entirety of the film. This represents in microcosm the project of the film: to translate Shakespeare's written text into visual language. The images flash across the screen at a rapid and increasing pace as the choral music on the soundtrack builds to a climax and the film's title appears on screen: William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet.

There are a few final points to be made about this filmic prologue as a whole. As noted above, Romeo and Juliet are not included in the sequence introducing the characters, and both feature only briefly in this introductory passage, Romeo as he enters Juliet's tomb, and Juliet as she puts on her veil in preparation for the wedding to Paris that she simulates death to escape. This creates the sense that the world in which Romeo and Juliet will play out their love story is so powerful as to all but crowd them out. The film's prologue also works hard to characterise the lovers as 'star-cross'd', and to warn the audience of the tragedy about to unfold. The prologue to Act 1 of Romeo and Juliet is in form an English sonnet, but, as the newsreader excludes the final rhyming couplet, its poetic form is compromised. As the text of the prologue is repeated twice more, once in voice-over, and once in legends, only the first eight lines are included, which results in an emphasis on the line: 'A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life'. The filmic prologue repeatedly stresses the notion of the

‘star-cross’d lovers’, and turns the words ‘take their life’ into a recurring refrain. Luhrmann interprets the ambiguous syntax of Shakespeare’s prologue, which states that the lovers take their life ‘from forth the fatal loins of these two foes’, as a reference to the lovers’ eventual suicides. But this aside, the repetition of ‘take their life’, an example of proleptic irony, insists upon the inevitable tragic outcome of this love story, just as the ‘hey nonny nonny’ of Beatrice’s poem predicts the eventual happy outcome of events in Much Ado About Nothing.

Like Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare’s Henry V comes with a readymade prologue. In adapting the play for the screen, Branagh does not use written language, as in his Much Ado About Nothing, but his filmic prologue represents a complex relationship between spoken and visual text. As Luhrmann’s film explores the space between film and television, so Branagh’s Henry V attempts a negotiation of the movement from stage to celluloid, making it a useful text for the study of visual language, which ‘involves the interpretation of dramatic conventions, signs, symbols, and symbolic elements of visual language’ (Ministry of Education 1994, 39). The Chorus delivers the prologue to Act 1 on a modern sound stage, which is littered with what we will come to recognise as props from the film:

O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
 The brightest heaven of invention,
 A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
 And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
 Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
 Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,
 Leash’d in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire,
 Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all,

The flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd
 On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
 So great an object. Can this cockpit hold
 The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
 Within this wooden O the very casques
 That did affright the air at Agincourt?
 O, pardon! ...
 And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
 On your imaginary forces work
 For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
 Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
 Turning th' accomplishment of many years
 Into an hour-glass; for the which supply,
 Admit me Chorus to this history;
 Who, prologue-like, your humble patience pray
 Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play.

(Prologue to Act 1, 1-34)

The Chorus is attired in modern dress, and in this way acts as a mediator both between the text as play and the text as film; and between the world of history (fifteenth-century Europe), and the contemporary world. Moreover, his clothing is neutral in both colour and style – a dark greatcoat and a black scarf – which implies that his mediation will be neutral. The camera work in the prologue also serves to introduce the Chorus to the audience as mediator. The scene is filmed using one single tracking shot, like the first shot of Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing, and the Chorus speaks directly to the camera. The lack of obvious cinematic business such as cutting from one shot to another, which served so powerfully in Luhrmann's film to insist upon the presence of the camera, helps to minimise the sense of that presence in this film (and perhaps aims to mimic the perspective of the audience in a theatre), thereby strengthening the relationship between the Chorus and the audience.

However, the mediation of the Chorus is not as unproblematic as it may first appear in terms of the negotiation between theatre and cinema, for this filmic prologue seems in various ways to insist upon the theatrical. The transformation from the natural light of a match to artificial electric light in the opening moment of the film immediately and symbolically establishes the dichotomy of the relative reality of drama alongside the artificiality of film. Derek Jacobi's performance, analysed as spoken language along the lines determined by the curriculum,¹¹ is closer in style to the theatrical than to the cinematic. He speaks slowly and deliberately in sonorous tones, with a precision and an attention to punctuation characteristic of a performer projecting to an auditorium. The Chorus turns to survey his surroundings as he describes the 'unworthy scaffold' which must house his performance, and the unbroken camera work, as I suggested above, may be said to gesture towards the perspective of a theatre audience situated on the other side of the proscenium. As the match is struck we hear the crackle of the flame, and the studio lights hum after they are switched on; similarly, the footsteps of the Chorus echo as he walks across the sound stage, and his voice resonates in such a way as to suggest the acoustics of a large room. And yet there is no denying that this is a film: the apparatus of the sound stage insists upon the fact. Moreover, the camera gets much closer to the actor than the audience in a theatre is typically able to, and the naturalistic sounds of humming lights and echoing footsteps are gradually replaced by the music of the soundtrack, which we have already heard during the opening title sequence.

The clash of these two modes is crystallised in the image of the door, through which the Chorus passes at the end of the prologue. This doorway signifies the transition

from introduction to film, from frame to fiction, from behind the scenes to the scenes themselves. But it also represents the movement from imaginative construction to naturalistic sets. As we follow the Chorus through the door, we cross the threshold, in a sense, from fantasy to reality: having been instructed by the Chorus to 'let us ... / On your imaginary forces work', we enter a world where that is patently unnecessary. The Chorus tells us that 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings, / Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times', and yet the film includes any number of realistic settings which do not require that we imagine, as Shakespeare's audience would have, that an empty space represents both Southampton and Harfleur, both the battlefield and the princess's bedroom. In this case, it may seem rather redundant to retain this speech in a film. However, it is little more redundant in the context of cinematic realism than in that of Shakespeare's Globe: Elizabethan audiences hardly needed to be told to piece out the imperfections of a play with their thoughts, and they were as aware of the limitations and the possibilities of the medium as was the playwright himself. Thus, the opening scene of this film has a complex ironic relationship with the prologue of Shakespeare's play, which could provide an inroad to a discussion of the conditions and conventions of the theatre for which Shakespeare wrote, fulfilling the curriculum's instruction that '[s]tudents should understand that each text reflects a particular viewpoint and a set of values which are shaped by its social or historical context' (Ministry of Education 1994, 16). Such a discussion could usefully be supplemented by reference to the Academy Award winner for Best Picture in 1999, Shakespeare in Love.

Written by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard, and directed by John Madden, Shakespeare in Love purports to chronicle the writing and first performance of Romeo

and Juliet, with a healthy Hollywood love story involving the Bard himself thrown in for good measure. This film represents Shakespeare's text existing simultaneously as written text, as theatrical production, and as film, and these three existences have a complex interrelationship. The film deals with the conventions of Elizabethan theatre, particularly the performance of female roles by boy actors, while betraying a continued awareness of modern filmic conventions, which involve, among other things, women playing women's roles. Therefore, the film could be used as a resource for studying the conventions and playing conditions of the Elizabethan theatre, and for considering the relationship between that theatre and modern theatre, as well as that between theatre and film. This film also raises the vexed question of biographical determinism by suggesting that Shakespeare's great love story was inspired by his own experience, and in this way provides opportunities to point out the flaws in this approach as a form of literary criticism.

Like the films of Much Ado About Nothing and William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, Shakespeare in Love begins with written language, in the form of a series of explanatory legends. However, in the case of this film, the words are not Shakespeare's, but those of the film's writers:

London 1593

In the glory days of the Elizabethan theatre
Two playhouses were fighting it out for writers and audiences.

North of the city was the Curtain Theatre,
Home to England's most famous actor, Richard Burbage.

Across the river was the competition, built by Philip Henslowe,
A businessman with a cash flow problem ...

... the Rose ...

The use of written language in the opening of the film is related to the film's portrayal of the character of Shakespeare. The first time we meet Shakespeare in the film, he is appropriately depicted with quill in hand. The title of the film appears on the screen in cursive script as Shakespeare's pen moves across a sheet of parchment. The camera moves to allow us to peek over his shoulder at the page (surely the fantasy of many a Shakespearean scholar over the centuries), where it is disappointingly and hilariously revealed that England's greatest poet is experimenting with different ways of spelling his name. This, of course, is a reference to the profusion of alternative spellings found in various documents of the playwright's surname,¹² and the joke comes to a head when Shakespeare writes his name in its now universally recognised form on a slip of paper, which he places inside a bracelet supposedly from the Temple of Psyche in order to cast a love spell. This joke about orthography, however, is a means by which to introduce Shakespeare as a writer, as someone who engages in the physical act of putting quill to parchment. The pages which flow from Shakespeare's pen become the foul papers which, in the process of rehearsals, are transformed into a dramatic performance by the actors of the Rose company. However, it is significant that Shakespeare's writing, even though it is just his own name that he is writing, is framed by the written text of the film's authors, which signals in microcosm the way that the story of Shakespeare in Love frames the story of Romeo and Juliet.

The opening shot of the film is of a blue, cloudless sky, from which the camera pans slowly down and around in a circular motion to reveal the interior of the Rose Theatre, taking in the seating galleries, the stage, and the earthen floor of the pit before coming to rest on a playbill for a play entitled 'The Lamentable Tragedie of the Moneylender Reveng'd'. We hear sounds from the street and the bells of the local church ringing, as well as the increasingly urgent sounds of someone in considerable discomfort. That someone is Philip Henslowe, whose feet are being suspended over a brazier by the henchman of Hugh Fennyman, a moneylender to whom Henslowe has some obligations. The visual symbolism of this opening is interesting for students of Shakespeare in terms of the way the camera displays the physical object of the theatre, and of the interaction between the visual signifier of the playbill and the action which is unfolding.

We may examine first of all the symbolism inherent in the film's portrayal of the Rose. As the camera pans from sky to stage to earth, the Elizabethan notion of the stage as a microcosmic world, after the design of the Ptolemaic universe, is exemplified. As Andrew Gurr describes the design of early amphitheatres like the Rose and the Globe, '[o]ver the stage, extending out from the tiring-house above the balcony or tarras was a cover or "heavens" supported by two pillars rising from the stage The underside of the "heavens" was painted with sun, moon, and stars' (122-3). There was also usually a trapdoor in the stage from which devils would issue on to the stage in the performance of such plays as called for devils, and in this way the area under the stage was seen to represent hell. W.R. Elton describes the correlation of 'the disparate planes of earth (the stage), hell (the cellarage), and heaven (the "heavens" projecting above part of the stage)' represented in the Shakespearean

theatre (Wells, 18), hence the significance of the Globe Theatre's appellation. The camera work in this opening shot introduces us first to the Rose Theatre not in the context of its horizontal environment on London's south bank, although later images are replete with local colour, but in terms of its vertical location between heaven and hell.

What is more, the camera does not linger in contemplation of the earth and the terrors which lie beneath it, but rather moves its attention to the playbill for 'The Moneylender Reveng'd', the action of which is being played out for real in the tiring-house of the Rose. This establishes the connection between plays and life, the notion that '[a]ll the world's a stage' which so many of Shakespeare's plays contemplate, and which is the central premise for Shakespeare in Love. The skills of reading visual language could be usefully employed in considering the ways in which a film like Shakespeare in Love attempts a visually convincing replica of the 'real' world it purports to represent, which may then be compared with the bare stage of the Rose: both film and stage are accepted by their respective audiences as a representation of the world they occupy. The love story of Will and Viola unfolds on celluloid as that of Romeo and Juliet unfolds on the stage of the Curtain: in pursuing the line that all the world's a stage, we might also argue that 'all the world's a soundstage'.

Shakespearean films such as those discussed above are rich with the resonances produced by the interaction of written, oral, and visual language. What is more, the examination of the Shakespeare film in terms of the three language strands enables an engagement with the complex existence of Shakespeare as cultural object and cross-

media text. In Chapter Three, I will explore in more detail and at greater length the visual language strand of the curriculum by considering the interaction of visual and verbal language in Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing and Trevor Nunn's film of Twelfth Night.

¹ The New Zealand Curriculum Framework makes the authors' broad use of the term 'experience' a little more specific, in its reference to 'effective participation in society and the work-force' (Ministry of Education 1993, 10).

² See Graham Stoop's unpublished doctoral thesis, 'The Management of Knowledge', for more detail on the influence of the Dartmouth Conference on curriculum development in New Zealand.

³ Where possible I have used the Oxford World's Classics editions of the plays. See the list of works consulted for specific details of editions used.

⁴ English in the New Zealand Curriculum defines close reading as the ability to 'analyse, interpret, and respond to language, meanings, and ideas in ... texts ... evaluating their literary qualities and effects in relation to purpose and audience' (Ministry of Education 1994, 88), which does not strike me as particularly helpful.

⁵ Other examples include the prologue to Branagh's Henry V and the long 'Non Nobis' sequence at the end of that film, the 'Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt' speech from Branagh's Hamlet, the opening sequence of Dead Again, and the final scene of Much Ado About Nothing.

⁶ Besides the prologue which features a television news report, the medium of television appears several times during the film. Romeo learns of the public brawl between the Montagues and the Capulets from a television report, and he and Benvolio learn that Rosaline will be at the Capulet party from a Shakespearean version of Entertainment Tonight.

⁷ Loehlin points out that the anchorwoman is played by not by an actor but by a real news reader, Edwina Moore (Burnett and Wray, 125), which contributes a measure of authenticity to Luhrmann's invocation of the journalistic media.

⁸ A comparison with the performance of this speech in the production of Romeo and Juliet in the film Shakespeare in Love might prove an interesting comparison, particularly because it appears to exist simultaneously as theatrical and filmic performance.

⁹ Later in the film the cover of Timely informs us that Paris has been voted the Bachelor of the Year.

¹⁰ It could be argued that this passage serves a similar purpose to the programme of a theatrical production, and in this way the film once again hints at the medium where this written text originally came to life as a performance: the theatre.

¹¹ 'Students should ... understand the structures and conventions of different oral language texts, and develop the knowledge and strategies for analysing spoken language, using real examples' (Ministry of Education 1994, 27).

¹² See Gary Taylor's Re-inventing Shakespeare and Simon Shepherd's 'Shakespeare's Private Drawer: Shakespeare and Homosexuality' in The Shakespeare Myth for illustration of the many and varied spellings of 'Shakespeare'.

Chapter 3

The Case for Visual Language: Shakespeare's Comedies on Film

Within the English curriculum, the study of visual language focuses on forms of communication which directly incorporate words or have a direct relevance to linguistics Students should explore various forms of verbal and visual communication and analyse the interaction between words and images, thinking critically about the meanings and effects produced.

Reading visual and dramatic texts ... students should analyse contrasting texts, evaluating the ways visual and verbal features are organised and combined for different meanings, effects, purposes, and audiences in different social contexts.

(Achievement Objectives, Viewing: Level 8)

(Ministry of Education 1994, 39, 120)

In Chapter Two, I was primarily concerned with demonstrating the ways in which the close reading of excerpts from Shakespearean films may serve to identify and analyse the three language strands outlined in English in the New Zealand Curriculum, for the purposes of elucidating how the strands function to produce meaning both in isolation and in various combinations. I also argued that the visual language strand is the least developed of the three: while it is divided into the two substrands of viewing and presenting, those substrands are not divided into functions as are the reading, writing, speaking and listening substrands. Moreover, English in

the New Zealand Curriculum conceives of visual language only in conjunction with verbal language, so that, unlike the written and oral language strands, it may not stand alone. This is surely explained by a persistent belief that the discipline of English must finally involve the study of *words*, but this severely minimises the curriculum's crucial emphasis on visual language, which constitutes a timely response to the prevalence and persuasive power of the visual image in the globalised media culture of the twenty-first century. Thus, the proviso that visual language must be analysed in terms of its relationship to verbal language limits the way that visual language is able to be defined in a classroom setting, and restricts the very nature of visual language by yoking it at all times to the written and oral strands and denying its ability to create meaning independently of words. With this in mind, I will be concerned in this chapter to extend the discussion of visual language introduced in Chapter Two. I will begin by considering in detail the production of meaning through the interaction of visual language with verbal in order to explore the potential of English in the New Zealand Curriculum's categorisation of language in terms of the three strands, but my discussion will also work towards a fuller realisation of the curriculum's radical emphasis on visual language by pointing the way towards reading visual language not just as an expression of verbal language, but according to its own terms.

My discussion of visual language will concentrate on the films of two of Shakespeare's comedies, Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night. There is evidence to suggest that the comedies are not widely taught in New Zealand secondary schools. Mark Houlahan and others have observed that the examiners' reports for the University Entrance and Bursaries English examination in New Zealand signal a marked preference for the tragedies: approximately eighty percent of

candidates in 1998 and 1999, for instance, answered on Othello, one of two tragedies specified for examination in those years along with two comedies and a history play (Houlahan, 4; Manins, 5). This surely indicates a choice on the part of the majority of teachers of Bursary English to teach a tragedy rather than a comedy or a history. While it is impossible to determine the precise reasons for such a choice, it is fair to surmise that the comedies and histories are perceived as presenting greater difficulties for students and teachers, the comedies because they do not directly correlate with a contemporary understanding of the definition of comedy, and the histories since the study of that genre, as opposed to, say, the tragedies, tends to require a greater knowledge of the names, events, and significant dates of certain historical periods.¹ Since comedies in particular are held to present obstacles associated with genre, it will be one of my objectives here to propose a means of access to the study of Shakespeare's comedies through film which addresses the ways in which the visual language of the films functions to represent the comic conventions which characterise the genre of Elizabethan comedy. This, of course, is intended simply as an example both of the way that the study of visual language itself may be developed in the classroom, and of the potential application of the skills pertaining to the analysis of visual language to the study of Shakespeare.

I will begin this discussion by considering the simpler of English in the New Zealand Curriculum's two explanations of visual language: 'Students should ... analyse the interaction between words and images, thinking critically about the meanings and effects produced' (Ministry of Education 1994, 39). Kenneth Branagh's 1993 film of Much Ado About Nothing, the prologue of which was discussed in Chapter Two, provides several more useful examples for analysing the relationship between verbal

and visual language. While my discussion of this film in Chapter Two was particularly concerned with the analysis of written language as it is used in the prologue in the form of words on the screen, this discussion will aim to go further, and to consider the interrelationship of verbal and visual language in less concrete terms. I will concentrate here on three key moments in the film which provide opportunities to analyse the various interactions between words and images, and which may be considered together as a sequence which embodies the basic principles of comic structure inherent in Shakespeare's comedies.

The first occurs almost immediately after the filmic prologue discussed in Chapter Two. In the scene in which Beatrice regales Leonato's household with a reading of 'Sigh No More, Ladies', a messenger brings word of the imminent arrival in Messina of Don Pedro and his men. This news brings palpable excitement to the picnicking party, and they rush home to prepare for the arrival of the soldiers, who may be seen, meanwhile, riding towards Leonato's villa in a straight line and raising their fists in a uniform gesture, their unity signifying victory. In an atmosphere of great hilarity, the two parties bathe and dress in preparation for their meeting – 'flesh being released all over' as Branagh's screenplay delicately puts it (1993, 11). The scene with which this discussion is concerned is that of the meeting of Leonato's household and Don Pedro's men. The moment of meeting is presented using a bird's-eye-view shot, which shows the two parties, each assembled in an arrowhead formation with Leonato and Don Pedro at their respective points. The two greet each other:

Don Pedro: Good Signor Leonato, are you come to meet your trouble? The fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

Leonato: Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace [;for trouble being gone, comfort should remain. But when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave].

(1.1.92-8)²

The formality and balance of the physical arrangement of the characters at this moment, fully revealed by the use of the overhead camera, reflects the formality and balance of the language of Don Pedro and Leonato, and to some extent replaces the formal rhetoric which the film cuts from Leonato's dialogue. The antitheses in the exchange – trouble and comfort, and sorrow and happiness – as well as the opposition of avoidance and encountering to which Don Pedro refers, all correlate with the opposing points of the arrowheads. Much Ado About Nothing is unusual in the Shakespearean canon in being predominantly in prose, but the syntactically balanced phrases and metaphorical patterning of this exchange compensate for the absence of the measured structure of blank verse.

The arrowhead formation also exemplifies the hierarchy which is fundamental to the world of the play, and which is similarly represented by this dialogue: Don Pedro and Leonato are the heads of and therefore the spokesmen for their respective groups, and it is the socially superior Don Pedro who speaks first. Moreover, while the language of each man is friendly and indicative of a long-standing friendship, Don Pedro's words signify a certain condescension, while Leonato's are characterised by respect for his superior. The perfect agreement of the two men, and the suppression of 'trouble' achieved by their exchange, is mirrored by the perfect arrangement of the characters.

The harmony inherent in the perfect symmetry of the arrowhead formation is representative of the harmony which characterises the world of the play at this point in the action. The rural harmony of the opening scene, in which a sense of community is expressed by the common responses of the group from Leonato's household to Beatrice's poem and to the news of the approaching party, combined with the arrival of the soldiers in a perfect straight-line formation, stand for a world characterised by unity. These images come to fruition in the double arrowhead formation, which organises the wild excitement of the bathing scenes into order and balance, and brings the two discrete groups into a union with each other.³

The arrowhead also sets up the relationships which will become key to the action: Hero stands opposite Claudio, and Beatrice opposite Benedick, and these relationships are, for the moment, undisturbed. It is Don John who separates farthest from the group when it relaxes into informality, and therefore he who disturbs most drastically the harmony of the arrowhead formation. As Alison Findlay observes,

[f]rom his first entrance, the bastard is presented as an anti-social type. He does not engage in the witty conversation of the opening scene and emphasises his lack of engagement in his very first line: 'I am not of many words, but I thank you'.

(104)

Don John's physical separation from the group, and the black of his trousers and collar where his colleagues wear blue, serve to reinforce the anti-social stance represented by his lack of dialogue, and these work together to signify the 'trouble' that, in spite of appearances, has come to Leonato's household, the first disruption of the harmony of this comic world.

While the above example matches visual representations of symmetry with the formality of Shakespeare's language and with the atmosphere of harmony in which the events of the narrative begin to unfold, the cinematography of Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing points to the moment at which the harmony of the world of the play will be shattered by means of a panoramic shot featuring a violent electrical storm. This shot is immediately preceded by a long tracking shot of Leonato's household and their guests at dinner. The camera details a lavish table laden with platters of fruit, loaves of bread, and wine in silver ewers and goblets. Music is playing, and rows of candles cast a warm and glowing light over the assembly. Down the length of the table the supper guests are merry and sociable, and the camera comes to rest on Hero and Claudio, who are ignoring their food in order to gaze into each other's eyes in the fashion of true lovers. The scene is characterised by the riches of the board and the good humour of the party in anticipation of the wedding set for the following day.

The camera cuts abruptly from the young and idyllically happy lovers to a broad panoramic shot of the skies over Messina as a lightning storm rages. Forked lightning crashes against ominous purple storm clouds as the warm sunshine of the film's opening scenes deteriorates into stormy weather: the impending threat to the harmony and unity of the world of the characters is emblematised by the disruption in the natural world that the electrical storm represents.⁴ What is more, the shot of the storm is immediately followed in the film by the scene between Don John and Borachio in which the plot to break up the wedding is hit upon:

Don John: It is so. The Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

Borachio: Yea, my lord, but I can cross it.

Don John: Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him; and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

(2.2.1-8)

In Shakespeare's text the scene from which this dialogue is taken occurs between the masque, at which the match between Hero and Claudio is arranged, and the gulling scenes, and it stands in opposition to the romantic good humour and the development of love matches which characterise the scenes alongside of it. The repositioning of this scene in Branagh's film serves to delineate more straightforwardly the descent into disorder of the comic trajectory, placing it between the gulling scenes, which are run together, and the scene of Claudio's deception.

The language of the dialogue between Don John and Borachio interacts tellingly with the visual language of the preceding scenes. Don John's prosaic assertion that 'The Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato' couches the relationship of the lovers very much in terms of the well-made match.⁵ As Don John tells it, Hero is not a woman in her own right but the daughter of a wealthy nobleman and the Governor of Messina; she is a good match for Claudio, beneath him in rank but sufficiently wealthy (before Claudio tells Don Pedro of his love for Hero, he takes care to ask 'Hath Leonato any son, my lord?', to which Don Pedro replies: 'No child but Hero. She's his only heir' [1.1.283-4]). Moreover her father is an old friend of Don Pedro, who makes the match on behalf of his protégé Claudio. Don John's language shows us again the romantic portrait of the lovers from the dinner party, but through impassive and unfeeling eyes: it is not a love story but a beneficial arrangement, which signifies nothing more to him than the preferment of others before himself and the happiness of those he hates ('That young start-up [Claudio]

hath all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way' [1.3.63-5]). This scene, and an earlier one in which Don John, Conrad, and Borachio determine to make mischief, are set in Branagh's film in the cellars under Leonato's house, and after the aborted wedding later in the film Don John is shown making his escape through underground passages. This subterranean location of Don John, like his separation from the arrowhead formation in the earlier scene, serves to characterise him as deviant and sinister – a 'thing of darkness'⁶ – and to separate him off from the other nature- and sun-loving characters.

The violence and chaos of the electrical storm reflect the anger inherent in Don John's language and the desire for disharmony which it expresses. He seeks '[a]ny bar, any cross, any impediment' to mar the happiness of Claudio and Hero's marriage and the union it will represent, and his actions aim to '[come] athwart' those of the mainstream: indeed, his dramatic function could be summarised by the word 'athwart', for, as Findlay asserts, 'Don John's blatant misanthropy is diametrically opposed to the social bustle of Leonato's house with its feasting, dancing, flirting and hospitality' (104). The repetition by Don John of Borachio's use of the word 'cross' in the scene in which they plot trouble (which may itself be a repetition of Don John's use of it in expressing a desire to 'cross' Claudio in 1.3) reiterates the metaphor of running at odds with or cutting off the forward momentum of events toward a happy conclusion, in this case the wedding of Claudio and Hero. Don John also employs the imagery of sickness, another disruption of the natural, to express his state of mind ('I am sick in displeasure to him'), claiming contrary deeds as the medicine for his ailments. Moreover Don John himself functions in the play as the embodiment of the disruption of the natural order, because he is a bastard: as the

famous bastard of Shakespeare's King Lear, Edmund, says of himself, 'I / Stand in the plague of custom' (1.2.2-3). Findlay observes that bastards in Renaissance culture were 'without a name or a place in the social structure, outside its values and norms, deviant The bastard, with no father, represented something "other", something outside [the] divinely ordered pattern' (1-3). Don John's language throughout the play is characterised by imagery of sickness, chaos, and the defiance of reason, order, and containment, and he, like Edmund, discourses on the aberrations inherent in his character: as a bastard, he is 'a symbol of disorder' (Findlay, 87).

While contemporary audiences are unlikely to be aware of the kinds of contextual significance attaching to illegitimacy in the Shakespearean text, they are alerted to Don John's otherness, to his malevolent nonconformity, by Branagh's simple but readily interpreted use of black in the bastard's costume where the others have blue, by his association with underground places and a lack of light, and by his physical separation from the other characters, his cohorts notwithstanding, in group scenes such as the bathing sequence, the arrival scene and the masquerade. Branagh's identification of Don John as the villain of the piece through visual language works in opposition to that character's speeches in the arrival scene which are designed to convey his sympathy with the other characters, and precedes the speech in which Don John acknowledges his own villainy. In this way, visual language is shown to communicate meaning by conflicting with and pre-empting deceptive verbal language. Moreover the sequential link associating the visual metaphor of the storm with Don John the bastard, who is responsible for the disruption to the harmony of

the world of the narrative just as the storm represents a disruption in the natural order, identifies the role of the villain in terms of the comic structure.

David Daniell notes that '[c]omedy was ... understood to move to a harmony', and that the accustomed comic resolution of an Elizabethan comedy was a wedding (Wells, 102). This is a conclusion to which Love's Labour's Lost points by its absence. The Princess proposes a year's hiatus before the nuptials of the play's four couples, during which time the suitors are to perform certain penances, and moreover the weddings are provisional on the continuation of the affections of the men, so that, as Berowne observes: 'Our wooing doth not end like an old play: / Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy / Might well have made our sport a comedy' (5.2.862-4). Don John's object and function in Much Ado About Nothing is to thwart (or come 'athwart') the comic resolution by preventing the wedding of Claudio and Hero: Findlay points out that, '[a]s a bastard, he is naturally inclined towards the unnatural destruction of social and spiritual bonds' (104). He is initially successful, convincing Claudio that Hero has been unfaithful to him, and persuading him to reject rather than marry her. Benedick soon recognises that Claudio's public disgracing of Hero bears the marks of Don John's handiwork: 'The practice of it lives in John the Bastard [, / Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies]' (4.1.188-9), but through the unlikely intervention of Dogberry and Verges the truth is uncovered, and another wedding is planned.

In the final scene of the play, Hero and Claudio are reconciled, and Beatrice and Benedick are convinced to forego their 'merry war' in favour of marriage. Benedick declares: 'Come, come, we are friends. Let's have a dance ere we are married, that

we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels' (5.4.117-9); and his declaration incorporates all the major elements of a typical comic resolution: concord, marriage, and dancing. As A.R. Humphreys argues, 'the harmony of music and the measured figures of partnership in dance' serve as a 'symbol of happy marriage' (cited in Jensen, 44). In response to Benedick's call to '[s]trike up, pipers' (5.4.128), the musicians in Branagh's film play 'Sigh No More Ladies', previously heard during 2.3, the first of the gulling scenes, and in the prologue of the film, when Beatrice reads it as a poem. Like Benedick's call for dancing, the words of the song signify the appropriate ending for a comedy:

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into hey nonny, nonny.

(2.3.63-70)

The actions of Don John, Borachio and Conrad have shown indeed that '[m]en were deceivers ever', while Claudio and Don Pedro threatened to prove that men are likewise '[t]o one thing constant never'. Although, as Zitner observes, '[i]t is wonderfully irrelevant to the circumstances of Much Ado to be told that women ought to leave lamentation over male infidelity' (203), the action nevertheless concludes as a conversion of 'all ... sounds of woe / Into hey nonny, nonny'. The film's cinematography again reflects these dramatic elements through visual language, and Branagh's film concludes with a single extended tracking shot of the characters dancing joyously through the gardens of Leonato's villa.

In many ways the end of Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing represents a return to the beginning: as the company dances, they sing 'Sigh No More, Ladies', the words of which opened the film, and the camera moves once more to an overhead angle, recalling the bird's-eye-view shot of the arrowhead formation. However, some progress has been made since the arrowheads introduced the inhabitants of this comic world: the pairings predicted by that formation have been fulfilled and Claudio and Hero, and Beatrice and Benedick, now stand side by side instead of opposite each other. Don John has been captured and the 'trouble' he represents contained, so that, where he was present in the arrowhead, he is absent from the dance that crowns the play's harmonious resolution. The unbroken camera work used to shoot the dance sequence, characteristic of Branagh, parallels the dancers' linked hands, and emphasises the unity that a dance was held to express, while the bird's-eye-view angle of the camera reveals the dancers moving in circles and patterns which echo the shapes constructed within Leonato's formal gardens: Don Pedro's men have been integrated into the harmony with nature enjoyed by Leonato's household in the picnic of the prologue, and the sharp angles of the opposing arrowheads have been resolved into circles and curves. The film even ends as it had begun with a shot of Leonato's villa against a backdrop of lush countryside. Indeed, the three long shots of Messina, the first which shows the sunny skies over the picnickers, the second featuring the electrical storm, and the final shot of skies which are sunny once more before the film fades to black exemplify in its simplest form the film's depiction in cinematic language of Elizabethan comic structure as a progression from order into disorder which finally resolves into unity.

Branagh's film exemplifies the simplest definition of comedy, inherited by the Elizabethans from medieval drama: Daniell asserts that '[c]omedy in the Middle Ages meant what Aristotle meant: that is, what is not tragedy, anything which ends happily' (Wells, 101), while Muriel Bradbrook notes that '[i]n the Middle Ages, when tragedy disclosed the fall of great men from prosperity to adversity, comedy showed the happy issue out of initial difficulties' (27). Such an examination of Branagh's film in terms of the essential framework of Elizabethan or Shakespearean comedy provides an opportunity, particularly at senior levels, to explore the nature of comic structure in greater depth, moving beyond the scope of the above discussion to consider, for instance, the ways in which Much Ado About Nothing compromises or critiques the comic model, or its relationship to the varieties of comic structure and form which critics have identified in the Shakespearean comic canon and the points of similarity and difference between this and other Shakespearean comedies. Another topic for consideration is the way in which the comic exuberance of Branagh's film and its preponderance of harmonious visual imagery tends to elide the fact that, as both Daniell and Bradbrook observe, comedy was often regarded as 'a species of cautionary tale' (Bradbrook, 28).

Moreover, Jensen and Zitner observe that Much Ado About Nothing is in many ways unlike the structural paradigm of what is often called 'festive' comedy, or comedy that moves towards a festive conclusion with weddings and dancing. There are, for example, no obstacles in place to impede the romantic lovers before Don John's intervention, and the play's opening is characterised not by the introduction of some sort of dramatic problem, but by joy and anticipation. Branagh's film certainly exaggerates the harmony of the play's opening by the interpolation of the picnic

episode and the use of the arrowhead image, in order that the descent into disharmony, epitomised by the electrical storm, might be all the more extreme. This emphasis on disharmony and the breakdown of fellowship tends to replace the play's misogyny with unfriendliness: the maltreatment of women, and particularly of Hero by Claudio and Don Pedro, which is sustained in Shakespeare's text by the silence and silencing of the women in the moment of final resolution, is easily suppressed by the joyful unity and apparent equality epitomised by the film's concluding dance. On the other hand, the film's simple characterisation of Don John as a typically villainous bastard through his black clothing and his association with subterranean spaces is in line with what critics have observed as the relatively two dimensional nature of one whom Findlay, for example, describes as a 'cardboard villain' (103). Such an observation could lead to a more far-reaching investigation of the Shakespearean comic villain, the bastard in Renaissance drama, or the role of the notion of order and the natural in Elizabethan society. Moreover, the study of the generic conventions of narrative and character characterising Elizabethan dramatic texts could be placed alongside an examination of the equivalent codes and conventions in late twentieth-century mainstream film, fulfilling the injunction in English in the New Zealand Curriculum that students should analyse the construction of texts in relation to their reception by different audiences.

The question of the reception of texts by different audiences is central to the second part of this chapter, in which I will consider Trevor Nunn's 1996 Twelfth Night in the light of English in the New Zealand Curriculum's second instruction concerning the study of visual language, which requires that 'students should analyse ... texts, evaluating the ways visual and verbal features are organised and combined for

different meanings, effects, purposes, and audiences in different social contexts' (Ministry of Education 1994, 120). While the emphases of my analysis of Branagh's film were, firstly, on the ways in which the visual language of the film translated or expanded on aspects of the text's verbal language relating to the function of order and disorder in the narrative, and secondly on how the film represented in mainly visual terms the fundamental structure of Shakespearean comedy, I will be concerned in this reading of Nunn's Twelfth Night to consider how the film combines visual and verbal language in order to cater for the ways in which the interpretation of certain visual and filmic codes is tied to the narrative and structural expectations of a late twentieth-century audience. To this end my analysis will consider in detail the opening and final sequences of the film.

Like the filmic prologue of Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing, the opening of Nunn's Twelfth Night functions as an introduction to the fictional world of the play/film. The most immediate purpose of Nunn's filmic prologue is to provide certain information pertaining to the plot, and it begins not with the court of Orsino and the lovesick duke, as Shakespeare's text does, but with the ship at sea whose wreck will land Viola and Sebastian in Illyria. Nunn writes that

[s]tarting the story with the shipwrecked Viola on the shores of Illyria has often been done in stage productions. I realized for the film I wanted to go back one step further and start with Viola and Sebastian, before the shipwreck, happy and inseparable, partly to establish the 'twin' story as the main strand, partly for the audience to witness the loss of Sebastian, partly to introduce the distant adoration of Sebastian by Antonio and partly of course to have a movie opening of some elemental ferocity and emotional desperation.

(1996, xi)

In this way, the filmic introduction aims not only to provide nuts and bolts narrative material, but to supply the emotional equipment the audience will need in order to work with that material. Thus, we discover the important fact that Viola and Sebastian are parentless twins, but we also share in the joy they experience in each other's company, and we feel the emotional horror of their separation. Moreover, Nunn's statement about his intentions regarding the filmic prologue also reveals an awareness of the kinds of generic expectations of a mainstream cinematic audience: this version of Twelfth Night needs to start with 'elemental ferocity and emotional desperation' because it is a movie.

According to the introduction to Nunn's screenplay, this prologue, which shows Viola and Sebastian on board ship and the storm which precipitates the action of the plot, was originally conceived as a purely visual introduction with no accompanying dialogue or voice-over besides an introductory lyric, written by Nunn (according to the pattern of the play's final song) and performed by Feste:

I'll tell thee a tale, now list to me,
 With a heigh ho, the wind and the rain.
 But merry or sad, which shall it be,
 For the rain it raineth every day.

(Nunn 1996, xv)

The purely visual introduction proved unsuccessful, however, as Nunn acknowledges:

As a direct result of the test-screening process, which took place in Orange County, California, I was asked to provide a form of voice-over introduction or explanation to ease the audience more comfortably into the story The message I was getting from the comprehension testing of preview audiences

was that it was not clear that Viola and Sebastian were supposed to be brother and sister, or that she believed him to have drowned, or that there was any reason for her to feel threatened by arriving in Illyria.

(Nunn 1996, xv)

So, where Branagh's film borrows the lyrics of a song from elsewhere in the Shakespearean text, Nunn pens his own introduction, and the first images of the film are accompanied by this passage in voice-over:

Once, upon Twelfth Night – or what you will –
Aboard a ship bound home to Messaline,
The festive company, dressed for masquerade
And singing songs each other to amuse
Delight above the rest in two young twins.

The storm has forc'd their vessel from its course
And now they strike upon submerged rocks.

Uncertain what to leave and what to save,
Brother and sister, orphaned since their father's death
Have but themselves alone in all the world.

The mighty billows tear one from the other.
Dauntless, her brother plunges in the main.

Deep currents and the sinking bark above them
Divide what naught had ever kept apart.

The poor survivors reach an alien shore
For Messaline with this country is at war.

(Nunn 1996, xvi)

Unlike the lyric which begins Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing, the words of Nunn's prologue do not stand alone, and a few jumps in the narrative are apparent

when the passage is read in isolation from the pre-existing visual material it was written to accompany. This is unusual for film, particularly Shakespearean film: it is more common for dialogue to precede and influence the development of visual and cinematic language. For this reason, this filmic passage lends itself to analysis according to the curriculum's terms for the study of the combination of verbal and visual language: by delineating the separate functions of words and images in this sequence it is possible to determine which aspects pertaining to the emerging narrative required elucidation or additional information, and thereby to discover something of the cinematic and narrative expectations of the test-screening and target audiences.

Nunn's spoken prologue begins with some clarification of the film's title (which the director describes as having caused some confusion during early meetings with film executives, being referred to as 'Twelfth Knight' and 'Twelve Nights' on various memoranda), as well as making a witty reference to the play's two titles. The visual content of the prologue establishes the fact of the sea voyage, while the voice-over designates the ship's destination, Messaline, as home. The narration also introduces us to 'two young twins', who are first seen performing a skit on board the ship and wearing, as part of their costumes, yashmaks which prevent the viewer from perceiving any resemblance between them. The voice-over states that the twins are orphaned and inseparable, and that the company aboard ship 'delight[s] above the rest' in the pair, while the visual material detailing the twins' comic performance embellishes their lively playfulness and their evident enjoyment of jokes. The mutual devotion of the brother and sister, who '[h]ave but themselves alone in all the world', is conveyed predominantly in visual terms: when a violent storm puts an end to the

festivities on board, the twins cling to each other as the ship rocks violently in the waves, and when Viola is swept overboard during an attempt to abandon ship, Sebastian leaps into the waves after her. The camera even shows them reaching desperately for each other under the water 'like embryos in a womb', as the screenplay describes it (Nunn 1996, 6): the visual language of the underwater shot functions to signify the psychological connectedness of twins in its reference to the womb, but most importantly it serves to exacerbate the horror of this separation, which is itself like a drowning.

While Viola and Sebastian and their background, their devotion to each other, and something of their personalities are introduced through a combination of visual and verbal language, Antonio, suffering a silent passion for Sebastian, is introduced solely through the visual material of the prologue. He stands towards the back of the ship's saloon, gazing adoringly at Sebastian who is performing 'O Mistress Mine' with Viola, and when Sebastian leaps into the sea to save his sister Antonio dives in after him. This provides some background to and constitutes a concise reading of the devoted affection which Antonio demonstrates for Sebastian, which critics of the play have found problematic,⁷ as well as serving to explain why Sebastian is later indebted to Antonio for saving him, just as the shot of the captain pulling Viola from the water helps to explain his role in assisting her once they land in Illyria. In this way, Nunn's prologue attempts to cater for an audience unfamiliar with Shakespeare's play by offering a visual explanation of the roles of two relatively minor characters, the captain and Antonio, as well as making clear the film's homoerotic interpretation of the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian, which, as Roger Warren and Stanley Wells argue, 'Shakespeare has dramatized ... in a way

that makes it hard to focus precisely' (Warren and Wells, 39). The use only of visual language to introduce these characters can be explained by their relatively minor importance in narrative terms: the verbal content of the prologue is primarily concerned with the twins, and particularly with the plight of Viola.

The filmic prologue takes the narrative to the point where the small party of survivors of the shipwreck lands on the shores of Illyria. The voice-over does not name this land, but explains that it is 'an alien shore', and a country with which Messaline is 'at war'. The verbal language takes the viewer one step beyond the point at which the visual language arrives, in that, where the visual material merely reveals that the survivors have reached dry land safely, the narration insists that the shore on which they have landed is perilous to them. Nunn states in his introduction to the screenplay that he decided to expand on the few references to war in the play because 'I thought the notion of establishing Illyria as "enemy territory" for the shipwrecked survivors ... would provide a host of reasons for Viola's plight' (1996, xi), and, as the responses of the test-screening audiences prove, it was not immediately clear to those unfamiliar with Shakespeare's text why Viola should be driven to pretence and disguise by a fear for her safety.⁸

One of the points which the audiences of the test-screenings failed to grasp, as Nunn points out, was that Viola and Sebastian were brother and sister. The test-screening groups were probably intended to represent a mainstream popular audience who were not for the most part likely to be familiar with Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. Their failure to realise that Viola and Sebastian were brother and sister may indicate that they were expecting the film to represent something closer to the

romantic comedy paradigm, in which it is expected that the young and attractive couple introduced at the beginning of a film are (or will become) lovers. This indicates that, while the audience was prepared to interpret the visual signifier of the young, good-looking man and woman, their interpretation subordinated the physical similarity of the pair to the fact of their being attractive, and therefore read their affection for each other as evidence that they were lovers rather than siblings. In so doing, this audience showed itself less than receptive to the possible import of other visual signifiers in the opening sequence such as the photograph of Viola and Sebastian as children with their father, which Viola packs in her haste to leave the sinking ship. This signals that, while contemporary (American) audiences are capable and experienced readers of visual language, their interpretation of certain visual and filmic signifiers and codes, such as the young, attractive couple, is tied to a particular set of generic expectations associated with the development and resolution of narrative. Nunn's attempt to translate Shakespeare's diegesis into purely cinematic language is complicated by the contemporary audience's Hollywood training, which leads them to expect a certain kind of narrative trajectory; an Elizabethan audience, by contrast, needed no introduction to the familiar comic narrative about twins. While the ending of Shakespeare's text, which features the happy resolution of two romances, will not disappoint in this respect, the test-screening audience's confusion over the opening section of the film points to the different modes according to which an Elizabethan audience and a contemporary one are accustomed to interpret diegetic material.

Another feature of the Shakespearean diegesis which Elizabethan audiences would have been readily able to interpret but which is much less familiar a technique to

contemporary film audiences is the use of disguise, particularly as a means of concealing gender. Thus, the visual language of Nunn's filmic prologue functions to introduce and elaborate on the notion of disguise and its related issues pertaining to gender, which are fundamental to Twelfth Night. The disguise is a dramatic device which allows for the central action of this play, in which a girl disguised as a boy is sent by a man with whom she has fallen in love to woo a lady who meanwhile falls in love with her. The Two Gentlemen of Verona and As You Like It employ similar devices to cause similar complications in the plot. But Viola's transformation into Cesario is not the only example of disguise in Twelfth Night: Olivia disguises herself from Orsino's messenger behind her veil, Sebastian gives out that his name is Roderigo after he is first stranded in Illyria, and Antonio presumably adopts a disguise of some sort to prevent his being recognised by Orsino's soldiers (in Nunn's film he dresses as a clergyman). Meanwhile Feste impersonates Sir Topaz the curate as part of the gulling of Malvolio, and Maria's imitation of Olivia's handwriting equally disguises her own calligraphy. All of these disguises, like Viola's, are designed primarily for the purposes of the concealment of identity and to prevent recognition,⁹ but where some have the purpose of jest and entertainment rather than revenge, such as the trick played on Malvolio by Sir Toby and Maria, other disguises have a more serious import and conceal the identity of the subject as a means of protection. An understanding of the importance of disguise is crucial for audiences of this film, since so much of the plot hinges on its use, but the visual language of Nunn's prologue also points to its thematic significance, and to the film's attitude to the relationship between clothing and gender.

Nunn's prologue illustrates the first of the uses which disguise may serve in the reference to the 'festive company' who are 'dressed for masquerade', and in the humorous entertainment of Viola and Sebastian which relies on the gender of the participants being obscured. They perform a song for their fellow passengers, dressed in identical middle eastern costumes and wearing long black wigs and yashmaks over their faces. The crux of this entertainment is the confusion over the gender of the participants: both are dressed as girls, but as they sing 'O Mistress Mine', it becomes clear that one of them has a baritone voice. In order to clear up the matter of who is the boy and who the girl, both yashmaks are pulled aside, but the moment of revelation is postponed as two moustached faces are exposed. The company is wildly amused at this joke, which operates on the disjunction created by the female clothing and wigs alongside baritone voices and moustaches, and builds on the song's description of a lover '[t]hat can sing both high and low'.

But the prologue also signals the more serious potential of disguise. The fact that Viola and Sebastian change out of their costumes into everyday clothes before fleeing the sinking ship clearly signals the point where the joke ends and the serious action of life begins, so that when Viola must adopt the moustache and her brother's clothing in order to protect herself in Illyria, it is not merely a matter of exchanging one costume for another; her adoption of men's clothing functions to articulate the difference between costume and disguise. Shakespeare's text also makes it clear that Viola does not just disguise herself as a boy, but that she restyles herself in her brother's image ('Even such and so / In favour was my brother ... For him I imitate' [3.4.371-4]), and Nunn's filmic prologue makes this point visually by showing Sebastian dressed in the cadet's uniform which Viola will later adopt. In this way the

visual content of the prologue, which specifically shows Viola and Sebastian replacing comic attire with proper clothes despite the extremity of the circumstances, operates to establish an important thematic distinction between disguise as dressing up or playing tricks, and disguise as a requisite for survival.

As I have observed, one of the functions of Sebastian's costume in the comic rendition of 'O Mistress Mine' is to conceal his gender, and the notion of the ability to misrepresent gender on which this prank operates, as both 'girls' are revealed to have moustaches, and then the first moustache is exposed as a fake, is representative of the fluidity of representation of gender which was an intrinsic component of the semantics of the Elizabethan theatre, where young men or boys could often be seen playing girls who were impersonating boys.¹⁰ This notion of the indeterminacy of gender will become a more serious concern in the action of the film, as Olivia unknowingly falls in love with another woman while Orsino finds himself increasingly attracted to someone he believes to be a boy. Matters of gender confusion are central to the comedy of Twelfth Night, but the homoerotic potential of the relationships in the play is ostensibly shut down when 'nature', by providing a male suitor for Olivia in the person of Sebastian to replace her female one, 'to her bias drew in that' (5.1.254). Contemporary casting practices remove one dimension from the layered representation of gender which characterised the Elizabethan theatre, in that women are no longer played by boys and thus women disguised as boys are not boys in fact, but Nunn's prologue sets up even more clearly the demarcation of gender despite its being disguised.

When Viola and Sebastian change out of their costumes before abandoning the floundering ship, this serves not only to establish the various implications of disguise, but also to represent the significance of 'nature' in the matter of gender. The first thing that Sebastian does when the ship drives on to rocks, throwing the passengers about within, is to remove his woman's wig, and, as well as changing into men's clothing, he is shown wiping his face with a cloth to remove his stage make-up as he and Viola prepare to leave the ship. In this way the prologue to Nunn's film, while introducing the notion of gender confusion through the use of disguise, clearly establishes that both gender confusion and disguise are largely incompatible with the seriousness of life: both Viola and Sebastian must change out of their costumes into proper clothes and Sebastian must remove every trace of his female apparel before they can flee for their lives from a sinking ship.

The film will later detail Viola's transformation into a boy, revealing each of the steps by which the illusion is produced, so that, for the audience, Viola's boyishness will always consist of bound breasts, socks down the front of the trousers, and the false moustache of the shipboard entertainment. Sebastian's easy disrobing to reveal a real man beneath the jokey female attire sets up the notion of there being a true, gendered self always present beneath the clothing of the costume or the disguise, and this informs Viola's apparently more thorough transformation into a boy later in the film. The clear delineation of gender in Nunn's film, which is surely a function of Hollywood's powerful and unambiguous demarcation of gender roles, is in opposition to what Lorna Hutson calls 'the inherent instability of gender in sixteenth-century thinking about the body' upon which cross-dressing plays such as Twelfth Night depends (Orgel and Keilen, 161). By visually removing this ambiguity

surrounding the question of gender, Nunn's film shows itself once again to be sensitive to the expectations of a contemporary mainstream cinema audience.

While the interaction of visual and verbal language in the prologue to Nunn's Twelfth Night functions to introduce audiences to the facts and the emotions of the narrative of the film, as well as to the associated notions of disguise and gender which the narrative will explore, it also serves to an extent to shut down or limit the subversive possibilities of the notions of disguised identity and the fluid representation of gender (in which, in the Elizabethan theatre, a boy actor is at once a girl and a boy) in the sense that Sebastian, though disguised as a woman, becomes unquestionably a man once seriousness replaces fun, and Viola, wearing a moustache that we have already seen removed to reveal her true gender, is always a woman under her boy's clothing.

In a similar fashion, the film's epilogue, which accompanies Feste's song, allows for the compromise of the comic ending which the fates of Malvolio, Sir Andrew, Antonio, Sir Toby and Maria, and even Feste himself represent, but then minimises the potential of that critique of comic structure by ending the film with scenes from the wedding party of the two couples, in which music and dancing drown out the melancholy of 'The Rain it Raineth Every Day'. Where dancing concludes Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night ends with music to crown the harmonious ending of the comedy, this time in the form of a song, performed by the play's minstrel, Feste. The song also serves as an epilogue of sorts:

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,

A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas, to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With tosspots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, [my tale] is done,
And [I'll] strive to please you every day [... every day].

(5.1.379-98)¹¹

Many of Shakespeare's comedies conclude with an epilogue, notably As You Like It, All's Well That Ends Well, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Tempest. Comic epilogues usually function to offer an ostensible apology for the play that has gone before it, and to encourage shows of the audience's appreciation. The final song of Twelfth Night is not an epilogue proper, nor is it entirely of the breed of those of the plays listed above. Warren and Wells observe that,

whereas the speakers of other Shakespearian epilogues like Rosalind in As You Like It or the King in All's Well That Ends Well step out of character to ask for applause, Feste simply presents the audience with a song that may or may not be a reflection of his own life.

(70)

Nunn uses Feste's final song as a kind of summary of the play and a farewell to the unfortunate characters and, through the combination of visual images with the various stanzas of the song, he is able to comment on the marked partiality of the comic ending: Sir Andrew is seen leaving in his gig as Feste sings 'A foolish thing is but a toy', and Antonio turns up his collar against the wind as he strides away from Olivia's gate to 'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate'. As Feste sings 'when I came, alas, to wife', he waves farewell to Maria and the surly Sir Toby, climbing into the carriage that will bear them away from Olivia's house; and a subdued Malvolio, minus toupée, walks dejectedly away to 'With tosspots still had drunken heads'.¹² Warren and Wells observe that 'the final moments of the play set Orsino's characteristically idealistic reference to the lovers' happiness, their "golden time" (l. 372), against the recurrent suggestion of a harsher reality in the "wind and the rain" refrain of Feste's concluding song' (70), but Nunn's filmic ending goes further in its elimination and exclusion of certain characters from the happy world of lovers into which the respective marriages of Duke Orsino and Countess Olivia serve to transform the once melancholy and grieving nation of Illyria. By visually reiterating the departures of the disappointed lovers, Sir Andrew, Antonio, and Malvolio, as well as that of the couple who have married outside their social sphere, Nunn's epilogue emphasises the bittersweet ending of Twelfth Night which sets two happy couples against one socially dubious marriage and three unrequited lovers, two of them humiliated.

Nunn's filmic epilogue also illustrates the way in which the comic world of this film must eject not only unhappy lovers but also the socially unacceptable before a happy and ordered conclusion may be reached. There is no place in Nunn's Illyria for the buffoon Sir Andrew, who has been rejected by Olivia and spurned by his patron and friend, Sir Toby, nor for Antonio the pardoned criminal and rejected suitor of the Duke's brother-in-law. Malvolio's public humiliation and private disappointment make it impossible for him to remain in Olivia's household, and Sir Toby's marriage to his niece's maid renders him even more socially unacceptable than his persistent drunkenness. The tidy conclusion of events also renders the socially anomalous Feste redundant in Illyria. Just as Don John is excluded from the festivities at the close of Much Ado About Nothing, so there is no place for the social misfits at the double wedding at the end of Twelfth Night, and, where Branagh excludes the unmarried Don Pedro from the wedding dance at the end of his film, the rejected lovers are likewise excluded not only from the wedding, but from the world of Nunn's film. This purging of the romantic world is achieved by the suggestive combination of Feste's lyric with visual language. Shakespeare's text is much more ambiguous about the fates of the unfortunates at the end of the play.

Nunn's film cuts from the departures of the outcasts to the double wedding of Orsino and Viola, and Olivia and Sebastian, and Feste's song merges into the music of the wedding dance. The dance, like that at the end of Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing, symbolises the harmonious order achieved by the comic ending, and even involves the use of a straight-line formation like that in which the victorious party of Don Pedro entered Messina. There is much friendly kissing and hugging, and Viola

is shown embracing her rescuer, the sea-captain, whose actions have not necessitated his expulsion from the happy world of lovers.¹³ The merriment of Nunn's Illyrian wedding ball matches the joyfulness of Branagh's wedding dance in the gardens of Messina, but where a noted villain is the only unwelcome character in the festivities of Much Ado About Nothing, the uncompromised good humour of the wedding in Nunn's Twelfth Night, following as it does the sequence in which the others depart and none of them happily, tends to elide the sorrow and shame that concluded the stories of at least five other characters.

Where the beginning of the film provides a backstory and a body of information to introduce and explain the world of Twelfth Night, the end of the film functions much more as an interpretation of the ending of Shakespeare's play. Nunn uses the lyrics of Feste's final song as a form of comment on the exclusion of certain characters from the play's happy ending, which their departures from Illyria in the film signify. He also offers an idealised picture, worthy of Orsino, of the future Illyria in the order and joy of the wedding festivities: Illyria has become a world of happiness and harmony once the lovesick duke and the lonely countess find marriage partners. But the emphasis placed by Nunn's conclusion on the incomplete happy ending of Twelfth Night serves to highlight the way in which this play functions to critique, or at least to challenge Elizabethan comic form. The problematic raised by the relationship of the two facets of the film's conclusion is not resolved by the final moment of the film, which is given to Feste; he looks directly at the camera for 'I'll strive to please you every day ... every day', taking on the role of the theatrical narrator or epilogue as if to remind us that it was all just a story after all. This, of course, is the case: the film begins with Feste singing 'I'll tell thee a tale, now list to

me', and the final shot of the itinerant entertainer looking into the camera acknowledges that we have listened, as instructed. Just as the final shot of Leonato's villa in Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing recalls the identical shot with which the film began, so Feste's concluding lyric harks back to the verse from the opening moments of Nunn's Twelfth Night. But Nunn's use of the song as framing device signals more than circularity in this case: it re-invests the film with its status as fictional entertainment, as a 'tale' – it is 'once upon Twelfth Night'. The opening lyric also asks of the tale '[b]ut merry or sad, what shall it be?'; and the double ending of Nunn's film, which plays up and emphasises the bittersweet happy ending of Shakespeare's play, shows the tale to be both merry and sad.

This discussion has endeavoured to show how the Shakespearean film may be deployed in order to examine the interaction between verbal and visual language, between words and images, but also to suggest that the analysis of the relationship between verbal and visual language may provide a point of entrance for the study of Shakespearean film, and of the Shakespearean text itself. This example has constructed a reading of the visual language of Branagh's film of Much Ado About Nothing which examines some of the principles of Elizabethan comic structure and provides a possible introduction to the study of Shakespearean comedy, and an analysis of the beginning and ending of Nunn's Twelfth Night which examines the tensions between Shakespearean diegesis and the narrative conventions of contemporary mainstream cinema and demonstrates the way that visual material functions as a translation but also as an interpretation of the verbal language of the text. While my application of the analysis of visual language has in this chapter been in the service of a relatively straightforward examination of comic conventions and

the principles of Elizabethan comic structure, I propose in later chapters to enlist the skills associated with reading the three language strands, as developed in the last two chapters in relation to film, in the service of an analysis of Shakespearean film which pays attention to matters of critical and cultural theory and their potential application to film and to the Shakespearean text, beginning in Chapter Four with Hamlet and reader-response theory.

¹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that the comedies are comparatively widely taught at junior levels in New Zealand secondary schools (although the greater proportion of schools do not teach Shakespeare at all at junior levels), but usually make way for the tragedies at senior levels or in years involving external examinations.

² Lines given in square brackets are not included in the screenplay of Branagh's film.

³ Deborah Cartmell argues that the exuberant sexuality of the opening bathing scenes 'culminat[es] in the men thrusting towards the women in a phallic "V" formation' (50), and, while this overlooks the fact that the women are also assembled in a V formation, indicates a potentially fruitful line of inquiry in terms of the interaction of verbal and visual language (in that Branagh's visual language is considerably less subtle than Shakespeare's verbal language).

⁴ It would perhaps be excessively fastidious to notice that the violent storm captured in this shot does not manifest as rain in any of the other scenes featuring the events of that evening.

⁵ This is, of course, an entirely plausible reading of the relationship, and indeed several critics, such as Ejner J. Jensen (*Shakespeare and the Ends of Comedy*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) and Sheldon P. Zitner (*Much Ado About Nothing*. Ed. Sheldon P. Zitner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), have found the highly stylised love language employed by Hero and Claudio as indicative of an absence of real love, rather than the opposite. Such a position, however, is predicated on a desire to discover the portrayal of 'real' people and 'real' emotions in Shakespeare's plays.

⁶ Prospero describes another famous bastard, Caliban, as such in *The Tempest* (5.1.275).

⁷ See, for example, Roger Warren and Stanley Wells's introduction to the Oxford Shakespeare edition of *Twelfth Night* (1994), pp. 39-42.

⁸ I don't find Nunn's interpretation of the hostilities involving Orsino's men and Antonio as indicative of war between Illyria and Messaline entirely convincing. The textual evidence, as Nunn states it, is rather flimsy. Sebastian actually seeks out the court of Orsino after his arrival in Illyria and, moreover, two marriages between the noble houses of Messaline and Illyria are entered into without any discussion of impediments raised by their enmity.

⁹ In this film, however, Nunn makes it clear that Viola's disguise serves the secondary purpose of allowing the heroine to adopt the persona of the twin brother she believes to be dead, to bury her own suffering self in the imitation of Sebastian.

¹⁰ See, for example, Callaghan (2000) and Traub (1992) for discussion and analysis of the homoerotic implications of the signifier of the boy in women's clothing.

¹¹ Square brackets indicate where Nunn has modified the text: Shakespeare's final verse reads: 'But that's all one, our play is done / And we'll strive to please you every day' (5.1.397-8).

¹² Warren and Wells note that various recent stage productions have employed a similar technique, particularly in showing Antonio leaving the stage in a different direction from the lovers (69).

¹³ A shot in which Viola and Sebastian reach for each other's hands while involved in passionate moments with their respective partners to my mind suggests that there may be a little bit too much harmony in Illyria.

Chapter 4

Response to Text, Reader-Response Criticism, and the Question of Adaptation:

Shakespeare's Hamlet on Film

Students will respond personally to ... a range of texts, including literary texts.

(English in the New Zealand Curriculum, 9)

[O]ne is no longer quite so interested in celebrating the unique genius displayed in Hamlet, but is concerned with seeing how the play is built out of the available cultural materials, how it is constructing a range of possible meanings, and what it can show us about the way we read texts.

(Misson, 1)

Hamlet isn't just Hamlet, oh no, oh no. Hamlet is me, Hamlet is Bosnia, Hamlet is this desk, Hamlet is the air, Hamlet is my grandmother, Hamlet is everything you've ever thought about sex, about geology ... in a very loose sense, of course.

(Tom, In the Bleak Midwinter, dir. Kenneth Branagh, 1995)

The Level 8 Achievement Objectives for Reading and Listening in English in the New Zealand Curriculum require, among other things, the student to 'respond to' the text under consideration; and Section D of the Bursary examination, which contains questions on non-Shakespearean drama, poetry, the novel, short stories, non-fiction,

and film, although not on Shakespeare, is entitled 'Response to Text'. English in the New Zealand Curriculum says the following on the topic of 'responding to text':

Students should respond to text in a variety of ways. Initial responses may be intuitive and personal. Students will extend their ability to discriminate and to understand text through close reading and through exploring and analysing the effects of words, conventions, structures, techniques, and images. At senior levels, students should be able to evaluate the effects and qualities of different texts Students should understand that each text reflects a particular viewpoint and set of values which are shaped by its social or historical context. They should be aware that texts can affect their own understanding. Thinking critically involves students in linking or comparing the text's view of the world with their own.

(Ministry of Education 1994, 16)

This explanation fails, in my opinion, to articulate helpfully any coherent theory of 'responding to text'. Rather, it comprises a jumble of superficial descriptions representing various twentieth-century models of reading. The statement that '[s]tudents will extend their ability to discriminate and to understand text through close reading and through exploring and analysing the effects of words, conventions, structures, techniques, and images' closely resembles the New Critical paradigm, while the assertion that 'each text reflects a particular viewpoint and set of values which are shaped by its social or historical context' is a clear reference to the approach pursued by New Historicism and cultural studies. The suggestion that students 'should be aware that texts can affect their own understanding' smacks somewhat of humanism and the Leavisite belief in the civilising powers of literature, but could also refer to the notion of the ideologically influential or persuasive text. The insistence that 'students should be able to evaluate the effects and qualities of different texts' implies a hermeneutics of aesthetic evaluation, while the spectre of

canon formation lurks somewhere in the background. Thinking critically, meanwhile, ‘involves students in linking or comparing the text’s view of the world with their own’, which is reminiscent of the work of the Cultural Materialists.¹

The closest this definition comes to offering a theory of reading is the bald and undeveloped reference to first responses as ‘intuitive and personal’. This still fails to explain ‘responding to text’ in the sense intended by reader-response criticism, which broadly considers that ‘[l]iterary texts ... are processes of signification materialized only in the practice of reading’ (Eagleton, 74). And yet the question of response to text is an important, indeed a crucial one, particularly at secondary level where students’ skills of literary criticism are only beginning to develop. The premises of reader-response criticism were fundamental to the reforms in literary education proposed by the Dartmouth Conference of 1966, whose influence on curriculum development in New Zealand is discussed in Chapter One of this thesis; and, as with so many of Dartmouth’s proposals, unexplored and underexplicated vestiges of reader-response theory are evident in English in the New Zealand Curriculum: indeed, ‘responding to text’ seems an overt reference to it, but its undertheorisation is an unfortunate characteristic of that document.

Reader-response criticism is in fact only one of many terms employed by scholars of various critical persuasions to designate a vast territory of scholarship traversed at once by intersecting, parallel, and sometimes diverging theoretical paths. Reader-response is a form of hermeneutics, which

argues that it is impossible to divorce the meaning of a text from the cultural context of its interpreter. In order to interpret any text the interpreter necessarily

and unavoidably brings to the text certain prior understandings or fore-understandings from his/her own culture. The interpreter's fore-understandings facilitate the process of interpretation and are themselves worked upon (ie. confirmed, modified, refuted, amended, etc.) in the course of interpretation.

(Baldwin et. al., 35)

Also described variously as reader-oriented criticism, reception-theory, reception-aesthetics, reception studies, and by other constructions along similar lines, reader-response criticism fundamentally considers, in the words of Steven Mailloux, 'what the reader contributes to interpretation rather than what the text gives the reader to interpret' (Lentricchia and McLaughlin, 124). The emphasis is shifted from the text to the reader in terms of 'the question of the *location* of textual meaning'. As Andrew Bennett puts it, '[t]he central question for reader-response criticism ... is: "Who makes meaning?" or "Where is meaning made?"' (3). Ray Misson asks: 'what are the conditions that enable this text to mean something, and what are the conditions that enable me to construct a meaning out of this text?' (1). Reader-response criticism has often been considered by commentators as a direct repudiation of the project of New Criticism (which makes English in the New Zealand Curriculum's account of reading seem all the more undertheorised), in the sense that New Criticism essentially holds that 'response ... is not a property of the reader at all but something inscribed in and controlled by [the text]' (Freund, 4), while, by contrast,

reader-response orientation in critical theory challenges the privileged position of the work of art and seeks to undermine its priority and authority not only by displacing the work from the centre [of the act of reading or interpretation] and substituting the reader in its place, but by putting in doubt the autonomy of the work and, in certain cases, even causing the work to 'vanish' altogether.

(Freund, 2)

As Vincent B. Leitch puts it, 'reader-oriented criticism abolished the text as the sole object of attention and advocated a primary role for the reader's consciousness' (Bennett, 37). Stanley Fish, a leading proponent of reader-response, argued that 'the reader's response is not *to* the meaning; it *is* the meaning' (3), and his work

focused single-mindedly on the reader's experience of literature. In contrast to the long-standing formalist idea that a literary text was an autonomous object like a well-wrought urn, Fish insisted that a work of literature entered reality for the critic through the act of reading – the process of reception Literature was process, not product.

(Bennett, 35)

Louise Rosenblatt similarly describes the literary work as

the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings. Out of this complex process emerges a more or less organized imaginative experience. When the reader refers to a poem, say, 'Byzantium', he is designating such an experience in relation to a text.²

(1995, 24)

Despite the common emphasis on the reader and the process of making meaning, reader-response theory, as Freund's account of its fundamental premises suggests, does not represent a single and clearly defined body of work. Andrew Bennett describes 'three major variants which map the limits of reader-response criticism': in the first, '[t]he focus ... is the particular response pattern of the individual reader', while the second represents 'a structuralist approach to emphasize ways in which texts themselves direct, coerce or "compel" reading ... it is above all the text itself that controls the production of meaning'. The third approach 'attempt[s] to negotiate between the text and reader, to elaborate the interactive space of reading' (4).

Moreover, due in part to a recognition that some forms of reader-response tended to posit a 'universal' reader,

during the 1980s and early 1990s reading theory has developed primarily in two directions. The first direction has been towards the recognition that readers are historically or socially constructed, rather than abstract and eternal essences [O]nce it has been established that readers are *different*, that no single identity can be demanded of or imposed on readers, then questions of social, economic, gender and ethnic differences become inescapable in reading theory. The second direction has involved a problematization of the very concept of 'reading' and 'the reader', a recognition not only that readers are different from one another, but that any individual reader is multiple, and that any reading is determined by difference.

(4)

Reader-response criticism also informs and is informed by many other literary critical disciplines: indeed, the accounts given above refer to reader-response's interrelationship with, in particular, structuralism, New Historicism, feminism, Marxism and cultural studies.

How, then, may we marshal the multiple forces at work in reader-response criticism for the purposes of articulating a theory of 'responding to text'? It seems to me that there are two important elements of English in the New Zealand Curriculum's account of responding to text which must first be addressed, particularly in relation to the reading of Shakespeare. Firstly, there is the vexed question of evaluation, with its inevitable connection with the concept of value ('students should be able to evaluate the effects and qualities of different texts'), and secondly, the curriculum's reference to the notion of the historical and cultural location of textual production, which should, but does not, incorporate an acknowledgment that the reader is also

historically and culturally located. These two elements are, of course, related, for evaluation is to a large extent a function of cultural and historical positioning. Surrounding the issues of value and evaluation, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith observes, are questions concerning

the significance of such labels as 'classic' and 'masterpiece', the extent to which the value of literary works is 'intrinsic' to them or a matter of 'fashion', whether literary judgments can claim 'objective validity' or are only 'expressions of personal preference', whether there are underlying standards of taste based on universals of 'human nature', and so forth.

(Lentricchia and McLaughlin, 177)

The place of Shakespeare in education, and particularly his central and often compulsory status in curricula, has too often been characterised by labels like 'classic' and 'masterpiece', by a belief that the 'value' of the plays is intrinsic and not a function of specifically located readings, that their 'objective validity' has guaranteed their endurance in literary history, and, perhaps most of all, that they appeal to 'universals of "human nature"'. As Terence Hawkes puts it, '[r]einforced and transmitted by the educational system, [the creature familiar to us as "Shakespeare"] is a figure we immediately recognize and embrace: liberal, disinterested, all-wise, his plays the repository, guarantee and chief distributor next to God of unchanging truth' (1992, 144). It is in this context that I want to deploy reader-response criticism in the service of Shakespeare studies, and a particular brand of reader-response by means of which it is acknowledged that 'Shakespeare doesn't mean: *we* mean *by* Shakespeare' (Hawkes 1992, 3):

It is surely the case that we can have no immediate or objective access to the works of an 'essential' Shakespeare, to the 'plays themselves', or to what they 'really' mean The point of Shakespeare and his plays lies in their capacity

to serve as instruments by which we make cultural meaning for ourselves. In short, we can say of Shakespeare's plays what we can say of those other instruments by which we make meaning, the words of our language. They don't, in themselves, 'mean'. It is *we* who mean, *by* them.

(Hawkes 1992, 147)

I should outline at the outset what I am *not* proposing in terms of a reader-response approach to Shakespeare. Catherine Belsey warns against 'a happy pluralism in which anything goes and all readings contribute to our understanding of the full richness of the text's meaning' (Shaughnessy, 61), the possible consequences of which are suggested by the headnote from Kenneth Branagh's In the Bleak Midwinter.³ This film illustrates and offers a kind of corrective to the largely mistaken direction in which reader-response criticism may lead students, the 'happy pluralism' which claims that 'Hamlet is ... about geology'.

In the Bleak Midwinter recounts the adventures of a group of down-and-out unemployed actors who mount a production of Hamlet in order to raise enough money and awareness to save an old church in the director's home town of Hope. Joe, the director, encourages the actors to bring their own experiences to bear on their reading and performance of the play, in order that they might communicate 'emotion' to the audience. This relates to the curriculum's injunction that initial responses to texts may be 'intuitive and personal', but the film also shows the dangers of trying too hard to align one's own experiences with those of the characters in a play. For instance, Joe asks Carnforth, the actor playing Barnardo, to remember an experience which made him really frightened, in order to bring fear to his performance of the play's first line: 'Who's there?' Carnforth describes having been quite scared after getting a flat on his

car while driving on the motorway so, in order to evoke that fear and use it to inspire his performance, he delivers the line while miming the act of changing a tyre.

But the film also illustrates the way that Hamlet is seen to bring to the fore the actors' secret fears, hurts, and desires; for example, Terry, a gay actor playing Gertrude, finds the closet scene 'a bit close to home', as it reminds him of the pain of his estrangement from his son: 'This play brings it back more than I'd have thought possible. Shakespeare wasn't stupid. Families ... they don't work, do they?' Similarly, a discussion of how to convey the emotion surrounding the death of Polonius sends Nina, the actress playing Ophelia, running from the rehearsal in tears, overcome by memories of the death of her husband.⁴ Emma Smith argues that, in this film, 'Hamlet is revealed as a play with cathartic powers. As Nina tells Joe: "We needed this play"' (Burnett and Wray, 141). In propounding a 'transactional' theory of reading, Louise Rosenblatt argues that

[t]he reader-critic achieves a certain objectivity through reflective self-awareness, through understanding that the work envisaged is a product of the reverberations between what he has brought to the text and what the text offers This kind of objectivity screens out the irrelevantly personal but ... affirms the inexorably personal component.

(1978, 174)

In the Bleak Midwinter depicts an engagement with Hamlet as a matter of seeking and finding one's own feelings or experiences in Shakespeare's text without bringing to bear any of the critical objectivity that Rosenblatt describes, a personal response approach which tends drastically to narrow the scope of reader-response theory, paradoxically by permitting the 'happy pluralism' against which Belsey warns.

The object of this chapter is to suggest ways in which Shakespeare on film may be used to examine the question of what constitutes a response to text, and the ways in which 'we mean by Shakespeare'. It will do so by considering, in the context of reader-response criticism, films of Hamlet directed by Laurence Olivier, Franco Zeffirelli and Kenneth Branagh as readings constructed in response to Shakespeare's text. As Belsey argues, performances and productions of Shakespeare's plays comprise instances of different interpretations or readings, and illustrate the notion of the plurality of texts which is fundamental to reader-response criticism:

The history of criticism seems to support the assumption that Shakespeare's texts are plural, or in other words, that any reading of a Shakespeare play which offers to define the play's single meaning is partial in both senses of the word [T]he history of criticism indicates that all readings are readings from specific positions, and that all readings have implications beyond our individual understanding of a particular play [I]n the case of a dramatic text, there is yet another production process, the production of meaning in the course of producing (literally) the play. The play-in-performance necessarily interprets the text.

(Shaughnessy, 61)

The question of how to analyse the ways in which the film as play-in-performance interprets the text brings me to the notion of adaptation.

Most readings of Shakespeare films, as the bulk of Shakespearean film scholarship sometimes woefully demonstrates, tend to begin, and too often end, with questions concerning the notion of adaptation, or the process by which a play-script written for the Elizabethan theatre, a theatre characterised by its lack of scenery, props and sophisticated technology as well as by the symbolism inherent in its design, is transformed into an audiovisual text replete with scenery, props, and sophisticated

technology, and symbolic in an altogether different way. Shakespeare's drama is predominantly aural: Hamlet tells the players visiting Elsinore 'We'll hear a play tomorrow' (Hamlet, 2.2.533-4), the Chorus in Henry V invites the audience 'Gently to hear ... our play' (Henry V, Prologue, 1.34), and the Prologue to 'The Mousetrap' in Hamlet proclaims: 'We beg your hearing patiently' (Hamlet, 3.2.160). The Elizabethan theatre, for which Shakespeare wrote, used no scenery at all, and usually employed contemporary rather than 'period' costume, as we currently understand the term, or a combination of the two. The visual means of setting the scene and telling the story of the play were limited: while Philip Henslowe's 1598 inventory of the stage properties owned by his theatre company makes it clear that swords, beds, crowns, and other objects were used in performing a play, Andrew Gurr observes that 'the stages themselves were colourful but essentially bare Of all Shakespeare's scenes written for the Globe, eighty per cent, it has been estimated, could have been performed on a completely bare stage platform' (191). Language, therefore, was the principal vehicle by which the matter of the play was conveyed, and the often quoted Prologue to Act 1 of Henry V alludes to the visual limitations of the theatre of the day and the importance of language for creating visual images: 'Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them / Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth' (26-7). Shakespeare's dramatic language serves to stimulate the visual as well as the aural imagination: the visual world of his plays exists within his verse. Film, on the other hand, is able to transport viewers to the places and show them the sights which Shakespeare provides verbally, and herein lies what has been one of the primary matters of consideration for the student of Shakespeare on film.⁵ Much attention has therefore been paid to the matter of the design of the film in terms of costume, setting, filmic style, and so on.

Another vexed question which has been integral to Shakespearean film scholarship has been that of the 'cut' of the text. Consider, for example, Ace Pilkington's account of the discussion surrounding the controversially abbreviated script of Zeffirelli's film of Hamlet:

[P]urists have criticized ...his pruning of Shakespearian texts. Lewis Grossberger complains in his Vogue review of Zeffirelli's filmed Hamlet (1990), 'Frankly, Franco, that ain't cutting; it's axplay.' And while other reviewers were less colloquial, they were equally annoyed. For Richard Corliss, with the elimination of material such as Claudius's confessional scene, 'Sometimes the movie forgets that it's Hamlet.' James Bowman wrote, 'It is not Hamlet without the prince that I mind so much as Hamlet without the words.' According to Mel Gibson, the slashing was even worse with the initial script. He 'called the early draft ... "famous quotes from Hamlet"'. Julia Wilson-Dickson, voice coach on the film, said of the final cut, "'It is, slightly, the comic-book version'".

(Davies and Wells, 165)

The way in which the Shakespearean text is edited for performance, whether for the stage or the screen, is a significant marker of the director's interpretation of the play: Zeffirelli's script for his film, for instance, excises to a large extent the political dimension of the text in order that the emphasis of his production should be on the family concerns at the heart of the play. This is not to say, however, that a complete and unedited text is by any means ideologically neutral or culturally pure, as my analysis of Branagh's Hamlet will demonstrate.

Shakespearean film scholarship has also devoted a great deal of attention to the performances preserved within, and some would argue fixed by, films of Shakespeare,

and indeed much of the literature on teaching Shakespeare with film is concerned with the analysis and comparison of the minutiae of various performances. But aside from the matter of filmic style, none of these aspects, it goes without saying, is restricted to the medium of film – indeed, the cast of Hamlet in In the Bleak Midwinter is concerned primarily with the cuts made to the text, production design, especially the period, and with achieving emotion and truth in their own performances.

Such approaches to reading Shakespeare on film are both valid and fruitful, and I will have recourse to many aspects of the adaptation model in discussing Olivier's, Zeffirelli's and Branagh's films of Hamlet. But, as Peter Holland argues, there are limitations placed on Shakespearean film scholarship by this kind of approach, most notably that '[t]he study of Shakespeare on film has often seemed intensely and agonizingly preoccupied with searching for answers to the self-imposed question of the films' relation to Shakespeare, and has usually triumphantly managed to come up with no better solution than that the film is and is not Shakespeare' (Burnett and Wray, xii). Moreover, as Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt insist, '[t]o judge a film based on a Shakespeare play according to how closely or how well it adheres to the (presumed) Shakespeare text is to invoke a criterion implicitly dependent on a referent no longer there' (1). I share Holland's belief that

it is time to seek for different questions to ask of the ever-increasing body of Shakespeare films Instead of gazing at the history of the study of Shakespeare films as versions of Shakespeare performance, we could now start to worry at the nature of the cultural circumstances that generate the object – Shakespeare films – which provides the material body for our gaze.

(Burnett and Wray, xii)

Rather than proclaiming one film to be a 'good' interpretation of Shakespeare's play and another a 'bad' one, might we not instead skew this position slightly but significantly in order to consider various films as readings of and responses to the Shakespearean text in terms that acknowledge the historical and cultural encoding of Shakespeare? Jonathan Culler insists that '[t]o engage in the study of literature is not to produce yet another interpretation of King Lear but to advance one's understanding of the conventions and operations of an institution, a mode of discourse' (cited in Freund, 71). Seen in this light the history of Shakespeare on film provides examples not of the supposedly 'correct' or 'incorrect' ways in which various film-makers have interpreted Shakespeare's texts, but rather of the different ways that we, as a culture, have read those texts over the past century or so, and of the cultural purposes for which we have deployed them.⁶

In reading Shakespeare, and especially Hamlet, we bring to bear on the text the burden of our historical and cultural knowledge about the writer and the play. Barbara Herrnstein Smith observes that 'texts, like all the other objects we engage with, bear the marks and signs of their prior valuing and evaluations by our fellow creatures and are thus, we might say, always to some extent pre-evaluated for us' (Lentricchia and McLaughlin, 182). Of this 'Hamlet offers a good example', as Hawkes argues:

At one time, this must obviously have been an interesting play written by a promising Elizabethan playwright. However, equally obviously, that is no longer the case. Over the years, Hamlet has taken on a huge and complex symbolizing function and, as a part of the institution called 'English literature', it has become far more than a mere play by a mere playwright. Issuing from one of the key components of that institution, not Shakespeare, but the creature 'Shakespeare', it has been transformed into the utterance of an oracle, the lucubration of a sage,

the masterpiece of a poet-philosopher replete with transcendent wisdom about the ways things are, always have been, and presumably always will be.

(1992, 4)

John Collick argues that 'Shakespeare is not merely a specific body of texts, [but rather] the name denotes a broad area of cultural practice and meaning which encompasses film, art, theatre, literature, education and history' (8). Likewise a Shakespeare film, particularly a film of Hamlet, is not produced within an historical and cultural vacuum: 'a Shakespeare film is not a hermetically enclosed work with a set of specific and coherent meanings, it is the sum of a number of discourses culled from these various areas of production' (Collick, 8); or, as Michael Bristol argues, '[e]very staging of a Shakespeare play results from a dialogue between the historical moment of its creation and the contemporaneity of the *mise-en-scène*' (1996, 13). The burden of assumptions about Shakespeare and Hamlet and the contemporaneity of the films' production prove factors particularly evident in the fashioning of the films of Laurence Olivier, Franco Zeffirelli and Kenneth Branagh.

My project, therefore, will be twofold. Firstly, I will seek to demonstrate the ways in which the principles of reader-response criticism may be employed to 'read' or interpret Shakespeare on film, not from a position that the film is or is not 'the play', as Holland puts it, but rather that the film constitutes an individual and a culturally located reading of the Shakespearean text in that, as Misson explains, 'the reader's cultural positioning will to a considerable degree determine the way in which she/he uses the freedom the text offers' (23); in this case, the reader is also the film-maker. Secondly, my discussion will attempt to present and describe some of the principles of reader-response themselves, so that reading Shakespeare may become, for students, a matter of 'meaning by' Shakespeare rather than locating the supposed essential

Shakespeare latent in the text, in line with what Misson describes as ‘a shift from a concern with what individual texts mean to a concern with textuality, that is, a concern with the ways in which texts are constructed and the ways in which readers negotiate with them to produce meaning’ (1).

As I noted above, reader-response criticism incorporates a broad range of critical strategies, processes, and positions, and tackles a great number of issues associated with the project of literary study. As Freund observes,

reader-response criticism attempts to grapple with questions ... such as *why* do we read and what are the deepest sources of our engagement with literature? what does reading have to do with the life of the psyche, or the imagination, or our linguistic habits? what happens – consciously or unconsciously, cognitively or psychologically – during the reading process? Reader-response criticism probes the practical or theoretical consequences of the event of reading by further asking what the relationship is between the private and the public, or how and where meaning is made, authenticated and authorized, or why readers agree or disagree about their interpretations. In doing so it ventures to reconceptualize the terms of the text-reader interaction.

(5-6)

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to illustrate all or even most of the approaches to reading that have been central to the reader-response project, and which have sought to address the questions and concerns outlined by Freund. I will instead endeavour to apply the reader-response concepts which seem to me to be the most immediate, the most helpful, and the most relevant to the classroom-based study of Shakespeare, and therefore to answer Misson’s question, cited above: ‘what are the conditions that enable me to construct a meaning out of this text?’ With this in mind I will be most concerned to discuss the kinds of cultural materials available to a reader-

responder in their interaction with a Shakespearean text, so I will consider the notion of the 'personal' reading, or what an individual reader brings to a text in terms of their own biography, as well as Stanley Fish's theory of the 'interpretive community', or 'the concept which designates the always already given systems and institutions of interpretive authority that engender both readers and texts' (Freund, 91).

The film-maker, then, may be regarded as a reader-responder whose response has been conveniently recorded in filmic form. The student of Shakespeare, like the Shakespearean film-maker, is also a reader-responder, whose response will be individual, or relative to their own experience, as Rosenblatt explains:

What, then, happens in the reading of a literary work? The reader, drawing on past linguistic and life experience, links the signs on the page with certain words, certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to *him*. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition.

(1995, 30)

The individual reader is also part of an historically and culturally located group influenced by what Stanley Fish defines as an 'interpretive community'.⁷ As Freund explains,

[b]y 'interpretive communities' Fish does not mean a collective of individuals but a bundle of strategies or norms of interpretation that we hold in common and which regulate the way we think and perceive. In other words, Fish ... subscribes to the semiological interpretive community ... which holds that our

categories of perception are not unique, individual or idiosyncratic, but conventional and communal. Encoded in language, institutionalized, already in place, they exist prior to the act of reading.

(107-8)

Thus, with the combination of the personal and the communal factors in reading, 'the reader's own reactions, like the work of art, are the organic expression not only of a particular individual but of a particular cultural setting' (Rosenblatt 1995, 112). I should point out, however, that my goal is not to address the question of how secondary school students may or do function as readers, nor to anticipate the kinds of responses they may produce in a reading the Shakespearean text, but rather to show that the kinds of factors which influence Shakespearean film-makers as readers will also affect any reader of Shakespeare.

I will also utilise the historical application of reader-response criticism, Hans Robert Jauss's reception-theory,⁸ in which the tradition of reading, interpretation, and criticism is represented as 'a continuing "dialectic", or "dialogue", between a text and the horizons of successive readers' (Abrams, 273). This approach is pertinent to the interrelationship between the three films of Hamlet under discussion because,

[a]s Hans Robert Jauss insists, 'a literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue' (Jauss 1974, p.14). The history of the reception of literary texts is concerned precisely with the problem of how we can account for the differences of reading in terms of the intertextual and historical expectations of readers.

(Belsey 1980, 34-5)

The comparison of three films of Hamlet produced over a period of fifty years provides a means of understanding the different historical influences on readings of

the text, but also allows us to analyse the cumulative effects of those different historically produced readings, and 'to comprehend past meanings as part of present practices' (Holub, 58). In other words, '[t]he theory of the aesthetics of reception ... allows one to conceive of the meaning and form of a literary work in the historical unfolding of its understanding' (Jauss, 32).

Olivier's film of Hamlet was produced in the light of Ernest Jones's widely influential Freudian reading of Hamlet, and it constitutes both an individual response, in that Olivier found Jones's theory most compatible with his own intuition about Hamlet as a man characterised by indecision, and a response influenced by the scholarship of the moment.⁹ Zeffirelli's film exists in the tradition of Jonesian Freudianism which characterises Olivier's film, but where it imports the Oedipal reading of the Hamlet-Gertrude relationship almost wholesale, it reconceives Hamlet not as 'a man who could not make up his mind' but as an action hero in the light of the 1980s model of the comic action hero, epitomised by Mel Gibson as Martin Riggs in the Lethal Weapon films. Branagh's film transparently aims to differentiate itself from its big-screen predecessors, the texts with which its interpretive community of viewers will be familiar, by its 'full text' screenplay and its transatlantic big-name casting, and its obvious obsession with textuality may well be a function of Branagh's anxiety at finding himself, as arguably the most famous and prolific Shakespearean film director since Olivier, teetering between mainstream cinema on the one hand and the academy on the other. My discussion of the films of Zeffirelli and Olivier will aim to model the notions of the personal response and of the response influenced by communal beliefs and interpretations, as well as to demonstrate the way in which the

different films of Hamlet are in dialogue with each other and with the accepted beliefs of the interpretive community.

‘In telling [Hamlet’s] long and complex story’, writes Robert Hapgood, ‘[Zeffirelli] focuses sharply on the core of family tragedy; politics scarcely figure, Fortinbras is gone without a trace, as is the opening appearance of the Ghost. The pace is rapid (this is an “action film”)’ (Boose and Burt, 87-8). Such an approach to Hamlet has earned Zeffirelli widespread criticism among Shakespearean academics and commentators, particularly from those like Grossberger, Corliss and Bowman, quoted above by Pilkington, who roundly condemn the film’s severely truncated dialogue. Pilkington observes that Zeffirelli’s screenplay preserves only about forty per cent of the text of Hamlet as it appears in The Complete Oxford Shakespeare (Davies and Wells, 165), and that this involves the loss of certain speeches – ‘Of Hamlet’s soliloquies only “to be or not to be” emerges entire; “how all occasions” is cut entirely and the others are severely reduced’ (Boose and Burt, 88) – and sees the elimination of several characters and much of the action. An important factor influencing the ‘axplay’ perpetrated on Shakespeare’s play was the contractual obligation binding on Zeffirelli to keep the film’s running time at around the two hour mark, which is clearly a question of the expectation of the mainstream film audience rather than a textual concern. But rather than lamenting what is left out, a more fruitful exercise must surely be to consider what and how Zeffirelli *meant* by the Shakespeare he left in, and what he, as a reader-responder, contributes to the interpretation the film comprises.

As Hapgood observes, Zeffirelli's Hamlet is essentially a family drama: it privileges the domestic over the political by eliminating Fortinbras, and with him the threat of war which calls for some careful diplomacy as well as the hasty stockpiling of munitions. The parameters of Zeffirelli's reading are established in the opening moments of the film. Gone are the terrified watch and the walking ghost: the film opens with the funeral of King Hamlet, and the shot immediately succeeding the opening titles establishes that this is the state funeral of a warrior-king, as grim men wearing irregular but fierce-looking armour stand about in front of the medieval stone edifice which is Zeffirelli's Elsinore.¹⁰ In the crypt, a distraught Gertrude farewells her husband by laying a rose crafted from silver on his armoured breastplate, while a crowned Claudius looks severely on. A hand in a black sleeve enters the frame of a shot of the tomb and places therein a handful of dirt: the camera pans to reveal a face in a black cowl as we hear Claudius, off camera, enjoining Hamlet to

think of us

As of a father; for let the world take note
 You are the most immediate to our throne,
 And with no less nobility of love
 Than that which dearest father bears his son
 Do I impart towards you.

(1.2.107-12)

Hamlet does not acknowledge Claudius, but turns to comfort, or perhaps to gain comfort from, his mother, under the watchful eye of an approving Polonius. The tomb is sealed and Claudius raises a sword into the air before laying it on the stone cover of his brother's sarcophagus. As Gertrude prostrates herself, weeping, across the tomb, the camera cuts to a shot of a serious and hooded Hamlet, then back to

Gertrude, who slowly raises her face to the implacable and emotionless Claudius with a look that is part fear and part curiosity. A second head shot of Hamlet reveals him looking sideways at Claudius, before the camera cuts to Gertrude, whose fear seems to be palpably lessening, then back to Hamlet, his eyes shifting about restlessly in a manner which is to become characteristic. It is at this point that he strides from the crypt, leaving to the sound of his mother weeping.

The transition from the public and political world of monarchy to the private drama of the Danish royal family and their individual concerns has been established by the shift from the exterior of the castle, where the mourning soldiers are assembled, to the close confines of the royal crypt, where the camera privileges the characters of Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet. Indeed, the bulk of this scene is devoted to setting up the dynamic between these three and the relationship of each to the dead king. Gertrude's role as grieving widow is compromised first by the inappropriateness of the unwavering gaze to which Claudius subjects her, and then by her response to that gaze, even as she is prostrated over her husband's tomb. The face of Claudius betrays little, but his symbolic raising aloft of the sword over his brother's tomb signifies not only a customary gesture of homage, but also the triumph of the new king over the old, and the act of violence by which, as we will learn, he earned that triumph. Equally the intensity with which he gazes at Gertrude signals his intention to extend his triumph by marrying his brother's widow. That Claudius is a villain is confirmed above all by Hamlet's sideways glance at the man he suspects of killing his father and desiring his mother.

Hamlet is first introduced in relation to his dead father, on whose corpse he places the first handful of earth, and his black cowed cloak signifies not only his mourning, but the melancholy Hamlet with whom Western culture is so familiar: this is the first instance demonstrating Zeffirelli's cultural location as a reader. But this relationship between father and son is immediately intruded upon by Claudius, and the insidiousness of the intrusion is enhanced by the way in which his words enter Hamlet's consciousness from outside the frame: 'Hamlet / ... think of us / As of a father'. In Shakespeare's text, this speech is part of Claudius's extended address to the court following his wedding to Gertrude, and is therefore as much an act of statesmanship as it is an apparently familial gesture. Zeffirelli's reading, however, is less troubled by Claudius's political machinations and contrived diplomacy than by the chilling boldness with which he offers to replace his brother as Hamlet's father as he has replaced him as king, as the construction of this shot demonstrates: the instant that the camera comes to rest on the face of Hamlet, the voice of Claudius intrudes from outside the frame, and the final moment between a father and son is splintered by the incursion of another 'father'.

The funeral scene in Zeffirelli's Hamlet is followed by a court scene in which Claudius announces his marriage to Gertrude. His 'Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death / The memory be green' (1.2.1-2) begins in voice-over against a panoramic shot of the vast battlements of Elsinore, which the film's title sequence also features, clearly establishing what it is that Claudius has gained by the death of King Hamlet. When the camera cuts to the state chamber in which the court is assembled, it is the members of the court who are privileged over the figure of the King. We see Claudius only in a very long shot, and over the shoulders of the

gathered courtiers and clergy, who are restless and talk among themselves, signifying that this wedding is not felt by them to be altogether appropriate. The film takes pains to signify not so much that he is a bad king – indeed, Shakespeare's Claudius is a very competent ruler, as his handling of the Norwegian problem in this scene demonstrates – but rather that he is morally bankrupt. The whispering nobles are clearly commenting on the inappropriateness of marrying one's brother's widow within weeks of the funeral, a theme soon to be taken up by Hamlet.

The remainder of this scene is broken up into two distinct sections. In the first, Claudius grants Laertes's request to return to Paris, but this scene takes place in the privacy of the library, and Polonius is the only other person present, besides a few studious monks. The interview with Hamlet, the second of the remaining sections of 1.2, also takes place in private, in his chamber. It is clear that Claudius is persuaded to go and talk to Hamlet by a passionate and heated kiss from Gertrude, and he leaves on her signal: the dynamics of an uneasy and reluctant stepfather-stepson relationship are thus established. Shakespeare's 1.2 emphasises Claudius's obvious and public slight of Hamlet, whose request to return to university in Wittenberg is not only denied where Laertes's to return to Paris is granted, but whose presence is only acknowledged by Claudius after he has given audience to Laertes. This, however, is completely elided by Zeffirelli's division of the scene. This is in accordance with the film's reading of Claudius as a corrupt and evil individual, as a kind of bad father to Hamlet, rather than as a Machiavellian statesman.

After Claudius leaves Hamlet's room in the scene discussed above, and Gertrude persuades her son not to return to Wittenberg, Hamlet kneels and presses his head

against her stomach, because, as Zeffirelli puts it, '*his heart is not come out of his mother's womb!*' (cited in Boose and Burt, 90, Zeffirelli's emphasis). A central component of the family drama enacted by Zeffirelli's reading of Hamlet is the relationship between Hamlet and his mother, and Zeffirelli continues the trend established by Olivier's earlier reading, which depicts the relationship between the prince and his mother in the pop-Freudian terminology of incest and Oedipalism. The relationship between Zeffirelli's mother and son is even more energetically and inappropriately sexual, as a comparative examination of the closet scenes in the two films will illustrate.

In Olivier's closet scene, Eileen Herlie, as Gertrude, has changed out of the formal robes she was wearing to attend the play, and appears dressed for bed. She is in virginal white, with her hair tumbling in curls over her shoulders, and her resemblance to Ophelia, who usually wears white and her hair loose in Olivier's film, is striking. Gertrude's bodice is low cut, and her robe comes away from her bare shoulders at strategic moments throughout the scene. Zeffirelli's Gertrude, played by Glenn Close, wears black rather than white, but her long hair flows loose down her back, like that of this film's Ophelia, and she wears an even more suggestively low-cut and off-the-shoulder gown, which becomes increasingly low-cut and off-the-shoulder throughout the scene. The physical space of Gertrude's bed chamber in Olivier's film is dominated by the only piece of furniture in the room, which Peter S. Donaldson describes as 'the queen's immense, enigmatic, and vaginally hooded bed' (Shaughnessy, 103), and the closet in Zeffirelli's film is almost identically dominated by an enormous bed and devoid of other furniture.

Olivier's Hamlet throws his mother down on the bed twice during the scene, once on the line 'You shall not budge' (3.4.19), and again as the ghost appears. Glenn Close as Gertrude backs away from Hamlet on to the bed as he begins to berate her, and he climbs on to the bed beside her for 'Look here upon this picture, and on this' (3.4.54). Where Olivier's mother and son only sit together on the edge of the bed, however, Zeffirelli's Gertrude and Hamlet not only lie on the bed together, but Hamlet turns his mother roughly on to her back and climbs on top of her, mimicking the physical motions of intercourse as he accuses her of being 'Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty' (3.4.85-6).

In Olivier's version, Gertrude kisses her son on the mouth after he says 'when you are desirous to be blest, / I'll blessing beg of you' (3.4.160-1), and Hamlet lays his head in her lap, much as Mel Gibson's Hamlet does in the scene in which Gertrude persuades him not to return to Wittenberg. However, Hamlet and Gertrude kiss much more passionately in Olivier's version before he leaves with the amorous proposition of '[lugging] the guts into the neighbour room' (3.4.192), and the scene ends with Gertrude sitting alone on the monumental bed. Zeffirelli's Gertrude has already kissed her son passionately on the mouth several times by this point in the film, but the most notable of these kisses occurs as an attempt to interrupt the barrage of abuse he delivers while holding her pinned down on the bed. The sexual tension of the scene diminishes after the appearance of the ghost in Zeffirelli's version (which is actually consistent with Jones's reading, in which the Oedipal scene between mother and son is interrupted by the father). By contrast, the most significant of the kisses occurs at the end of the scene in Olivier's film, but where the dynamics of the two versions are different, the similarities in the design and construction of the two closet

scenes are telling of the influence of the former film on the latter.¹¹ In almost certainly deliberate contrast with both these versions, Branagh's *Hamlet* and Gertrude sit chastely on a sofa in a room which is veritably cluttered with ornamental furniture, and, although Gertrude's hair is unpinned, she is very modestly dressed.

Robert Hapgood describes the 'autobiographical parallels' between Zeffirelli's life and his filmic readings of Shakespeare, and particularly of *Hamlet*:

His illegitimacy, with an absent father who at first would not acknowledge him; his successive mother-figures (his nurse, his dying mother, his aunt), each change involving a withdrawal of love...; his homosexuality; his adventurous ability to win his way through war, poverty, and artistic hostilities....

(Boose and Burt, 90)

Hapgood argues that the Oedipal reading of the Gertrude-Hamlet relationship in his *Hamlet* is representative of his own relationship with his mother, although he suggests that 'In this case Zeffirelli's private compulsions are not fully in tune with the main action' (Boose and Burt, 91), finding the highly sexualised closet scene uncomfortable in the context of the rest of the film.

Similarly, Peter S. Donaldson describes Olivier's interpretation as 'partly Jonesian and partly his own' (Shaughnessy, 105), and he discusses in particular Olivier's use of the staircase motif throughout the film:

Staircases are often the setting for violence, the locus of a repeated pattern in which someone is thrown down on the steps and the attacker flees upwards, leaving the victim in an ambivalent state in which elements of reproach and pain are mingled with feelings of loss.

(Shaughnessy, 107)

In Confessions of an Actor Olivier describes a frightening experience he had as a child in which he was attacked by an older boy on a staircase. The older boy pinned Olivier down on the stairs by lying on top of him, and made him insist repeatedly 'No, no, let me go, I don't want it', before finally allowing him to run away in search of his mother (cited in Shaughnessy, 105). Donaldson argues that 'various aspects of the staircase motif as it is used in the film evoke, with surprising literalness, the traumatic incident the director suffered at All Saints in 1916' (Shaughnessy, 107). Indeed, the closet scene begins with Olivier as Hamlet ascending a winding staircase calling 'Mother, mother, mother!'

While this approach raises the dangerous spectre of biographical determinism, which decades of criticism have sought to banish from literary study, Rosenblatt nonetheless stresses the importance of the personal in a student's reading:

The teacher realistically concerned with helping his students develop a vital sense of literature cannot ... keep his eyes focused only on the literary materials he is seeking to make available. He must also understand the personalities who are to experience this literature. He must be ready to face the fact that the students' reactions will inevitably be in terms of their own temperaments and backgrounds. Undoubtedly these may often lead the students to do injustice to the text. Nevertheless, the student's primary experience of the work will have had meaning for him in these personal terms and no others. No matter how imperfect or mistaken, this will constitute the present meaning of the work for him, rather than anything he docilely repeats about it.

(1995, 50)

To consider Olivier's and Zeffirelli's readings of Hamlet in terms of the way their personal experiences provide a context in which the text is interpreted and responded to is a means of illustrating the ways in which a student reader-responder's own

experience may influence their interpretation of a text. Moreover, a consideration of the influence of the interpretive community, which, in the case of Olivier and Zeffirelli, is Freudianism, places the reader-responder's personal response in a cultural context, minimising the potential for recourse to biographical determinism.

Hapgood's explanation of the influences leading to Zeffirelli's Oedipal reading of Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude, while appropriate in terms of personal response, does not take into consideration Zeffirelli's positioning as a reader in cultural terms. While Olivier's represents a more comprehensive working out of a Freudian Hamlet (the design of Elsinore, for example, is reminiscent of the complex structures of the psyche, and the account of Hamlet as a man stricken by indecision is fundamental to Jones's argument), Zeffirelli's film seems rather to adopt the Oedipal reading of Hamlet's relationship with his mother as part of the play's popular afterlife in the twentieth century, largely created by Olivier's film and Jones's pervasive interpretation of the play, just as the first appearance of his Hamlet in a black cloak and hood responds to the historically developed figure of the melancholy Dane. Students reading the play will similarly bring to Hamlet the same kinds of culturally prevalent assumptions about the play that characterise aspects of Zeffirelli's interpretation: as Rosenblatt suggests, 'when high school students make the relationship between Hamlet and his mother the core of their interpretation of his actions, whether or not they even know the name Freud, they have absorbed, somehow, somewhere, certain of the psychoanalytic concepts' (1995, 10).

The influence of Olivier seems also to loom over Zeffirelli's film in the criticism it has received for presenting Hamlet as an 'action film' and casting an action hero in

the role of the Prince. Olivier's insistence that Hamlet is 'a man who could not make up his mind' comprises a reading which, like that of many critics before him, focuses on Hamlet's characteristic propensity for engaging in extended exercises in reasoning, debating, and internal argument, resulting in his inability to fulfil the injunction of the Ghost to 'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder' (1.5.25). The prologue to Olivier's Hamlet explains the film's position on the question of Hamlet's 'delay':

So oft it chances in particular men
That through some vicious mole of nature in them,
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit grown too much: that these men –
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Their virtues else – be they as pure as grace,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault.

This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind.¹²

The position expounded by Olivier's prologue is that from which Ernest Jones's argument begins. Jones defines 'the central mystery' of Hamlet as 'the meaning of Hamlet's hesitancy in seeking to obtain revenge for his father's murder', and goes on to explain that the conclusion reached by Hamlet scholarship 'essentially is that Hamlet, for temperamental reasons, was inherently incapable of decisive action of any kind' (22, 27). Jones's explanation of Hamlet's indecision is that he suffers from a 'tortured conscience', and the reasons for this mental anguish relate to Oedipal guilt.¹³

Olivier's indecisive Hamlet is based on Jones's interpretation, itself extrapolated from Freud's reading of Hamlet, which draws on and modestly aims to solve the problems of decades of delay-related scholarship: as Freud observes,

[t]he play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result.

(The Interpretation of Dreams, 367)

But the diagnosis of Hamlet as a man paralysed by indecision and therefore guilty of delay in carrying out the Ghost's instruction is by no means common to all critical positions on the play. Shakespeare's Hamlet in fact does much more in the play than stand around thinking, as Freud acknowledges: he puts on a play, he takes an aborted trip to England and fights some pirates, all the while convincing the court and his family that he is mad, and keeping up his fencing practice. What is more, he does not hesitate to send his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths, nor to run Polonius through when he believes that it is Claudius concealed behind the arras in Gertrude's closet. Eleanor Prosser's description of the tradition of Hamlet on the stage observes that 'Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences apparently were most struck by Hamlet's zany behaviour' and, '[f]rom accounts of Betterton's¹⁴ performance, we gather that audiences were most struck by Hamlet's robust energy Basically, the Restoration Hamlet was an energetic, justified revenger', although, '[b]y the middle of the nineteenth century, Hamlet became ...emasculated and sentimental' (239-41).

Hamlet's failure to carry out with speed the task set for him by the Ghost does not necessarily characterise him as inactive, as the play's history on the stage

demonstrates. Hence Zeffirelli's reading of Hamlet as active and energetic as well as introspective and tortured is not a misreading by any means, being perhaps, as Hapgood implies, influenced by his own experiences of '[winning] his way through war, poverty, and artistic hostilities'. Nor, as Prosser's account reveals, is the action-man Hamlet unprecedented in the history of performance. However, the monumental status of Olivier's Hamlet in the world of Shakespearean film has meant that any film-maker who has tackled Hamlet since effectively faces the task not only of responding to Shakespeare's text, but of responding to Olivier's as well. In this way, Zeffirelli's adoption of the Oedipal interpretation of the Hamlet-Gertrude relationship and his rejection of the Jonesian indecisive Hamlet constitute a response to Olivier's Hamlet as well as a response to Shakespeare's.

The Freud/Jones reading of Hamlet as part of the equipment with which the post-Freudian interpretive community reads Hamlet is only one example along the lines of which the notion of the response of the interpretive community may be modelled. For instance, the cultural imperialistic position which holds that Shakespeare is indivisible from Englishness is a fruitful context in which to compare Olivier's film, made in the wake of World War Two, and Zeffirelli's, whose cast brands the film as both a high culture-popular culture crossover and a transatlantic Shakespeare. Zeffirelli, of course, beat Branagh to the transatlantic casting approach, but the latter's casting of screen legends Charlton Heston and Jack Lemmon and comic greats Billy Crystal and Robin Williams from the United States, and Shakespearean giants Sir John Gielgud, Dame Judi Dench and Derek Jacobi from the United Kingdom, does tend to overwhelm Zeffirelli's cast.

When Kenneth Branagh came to make his film version of Hamlet in 1996, he faced the unenviable task of making a film in the tradition of, and therefore responding to, those of Olivier and Zeffirelli, which had both enjoyed box-office glory and widespread critical attention, and I have already described the significant and almost certainly deliberate differences between Branagh's closet scene and those of his predecessors. Prosser argues that '[o]ur culture is permeated by the Hamlet myth' (xiv), and Branagh's film bears all the hallmarks of a reading which intends to define that myth. His four hour film of Hamlet, which boasts a 'full' text ill-informedly (in terms of revisionist textual scholarship, at least) purporting to contain every word of this play that Shakespeare penned, sets out to differentiate itself from its big-screen predecessors by that very fact, and is characterised more than anything by the sense of its own boldness in the face of the most intimidating monument of English literature: in his determination to make a Hamlet which is at once 'a domestic tragedy', 'a national tragedy', and 'an all-embracing survey of life' (Branagh 1996, xiii-iv), Branagh reveals his urgency to respond to all positions on Hamlet since its first performance at the Globe, and then to produce something entirely new and utterly definitive. This project begins with the two-pronged attack of the full-text screenplay and the big-name transatlantic cast. Both of these aspects of the film suggest something of a pull away from the bare-faced assault on popular culture represented by Zeffirelli's casting of Mel Gibson as Hamlet, and a desire to negotiate a position more comfortably situated at the intersection of popular film, theatrical Shakespeare, and academic Shakespearean scholarship, and which retains a foot in both the English and American camps. What results, however, is a film postmodern not by design, but

in effect. While visually sophisticated and for the most part well performed, Branagh's Hamlet is eclectic and diffuse, and often as antic as Hamlet's disposition.

As Emma Smith observes in an insightful essay entitled 'Either for tragedy, comedy', Branagh's In the Bleak Midwinter, released in 1995, provides valuable insights into 'the contemporaneous pre-production travails' of Branagh's Hamlet, and '[m]ost crucially, it is ... an attempt at a scapegoat, diverting what is particularly ridiculous and laughable about the play itself, siphoning off Hamlet's dangerous proximity to comedy, and leaving the film of Hamlet as generically pure and serious high art' (Burnett and Wray, 137). I would argue further that Branagh's concern to produce a film of Hamlet which constitutes 'pure and serious high art' is not only a generic concern but a cultural one as well. In an interview with Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray, Branagh describes the project of making a four hour film of Hamlet with a 'full' text as a futile exercise, but claims that he persevered with it because 'it was more to do with having fun, and in a way having fun at my own expense' (Burnett and Wray, 171). However it seems to me that this explanation simply does not ring true, partly, perhaps, because it was given self-consciously in an interview with two academics compiling an anthology on Shakespearean film, in an atmosphere likely to have been permeated by the long-running mutual suspicion, if not hostility among Shakespearean academics on the one hand and theatrical and filmic practitioners on the other. But another factor influencing Branagh's project which he was probably less able to identify is the very cultural weight of Hamlet, which, to return to the account by Hawkes quoted above, 'has taken on a huge and complex symbolizing function and, as a part of the institution called "English literature".... it has been transformed into the utterance of an oracle, the lucubration

of a sage, the masterpiece of a poet-philosopher replete with transcendent wisdom' (1992, 4).

Branagh's anxiety in the face of the symbolising function of Hamlet is evidenced by the film's unquestioning veneration, even fetishisation, of the Shakespearean word. The first shot of the film is of the word 'HAMLET' engraved in a block of stone, which turns out to be the base of a huge bronze statue of King Hamlet. When this statue is toppled by Fortinbras's men at the end of the film, the shattered pieces of bronze fall to the ground, obscuring the name of the fallen king, but the word 'HAMLET' remains, cast in stone, as it were. This preoccupation with the Shakespearean word is evident elsewhere, and Andrew Murphy describes Branagh's Hamlet as 'a peculiarly bibliocentric production':

As Mark Thornton Burnett has noted, the movie is decidedly 'bookish' – 'a favourite retreat for Hamlet is his book-lined study' The book-lined-study is the central space associated with Hamlet in the film, and it is noteworthy that two of the entrances to the study consist of hinged bookcases. The concealed doorways are wholly in keeping with Branagh's broader vision of Elsinore as a claustrophobic, secretive warren, but, by marking the primary entrances into Hamlet's own space in this way, we may also feel that there is a subtle suggestion here that the central location at the heart of the narrative can only be accessed through the medium of text.

(Burnett and Wray, 11)

This anxiety about the book and the containment within text of meaning, especially Shakespearean meaning, finds its primary expression in the 'cut' of the film's screenplay. He notes that '[t]he screenplay is based on the text of Hamlet as it appears in the First Folio Nothing has been cut from this text, and some passages absent

from it ... have been supplied from the Second Quarto' (Branagh 1996, 174). Such an approach tends to set decades of bibliographical criticism at naught (how can Branagh be sure, after all, that 'to be or not to be' is 'the question' and not 'the point'?), and, according to the revisionist theories surrounding Hamlet's several texts, '[t]o conflate the texts ... is to ignore the specificities of Renaissance theatrical history, thereby producing a version of the text wholly alien to Shakespeare's own theatre' (Murphy, in Burnett and Wray, 12).¹⁵

Branagh's obsession with the symbolic weight of the Shakespearean text also manifests in his tendency to provide visual accompaniment for almost every piece of reported action in the play. As Harris observes,

in the twenty scenes of the First Folio text, Branagh has added flashbacks to ten of them, a flash-forward in another, extra-textual material in the 'real time' of the diegesis in six others, and parallel-time intercuts in two more. Several scenes contain more than one of these augmenting features.

(Harris, 80)

As though to demonstrate the accuracy and sensitivity of his understanding of Hamlet, Branagh's film shows us in the very first scene the labourers of Elsinore hard at work on the munitions, referred to by Marcellus, and Fortinbras railing at Old Norway about the lands lost to Denmark as described by Horatio in 1.1. Flashbacks of Hamlet and Ophelia in bed together as Polonius rails at his daughter about her relationship with the prince define the precise nature of that relationship as Branagh conceives it, and make explicit Ophelia's feelings as she is berated by both brother and father, while shots of Claudius poisoning the King in the orchard, and of Gertrude and Claudius carrying on inappropriately when King Hamlet is distracted during a game of curling in the hallways of Elsinore, eliminate the ambiguity of the Ghost's speech

to Hamlet. When Hamlet lists Claudius's many sins during his speech in the prayer scene (3.3), visual material from earlier in the film is used to illustrate that the king really is as black as Hamlet paints him. This trend continues throughout the film, although interestingly Branagh does not show the death of Ophelia, which is the one piece of reported action realised visually by both Olivier and Zeffirelli, the first famously evoking John Everett Millais's painting of the drowned Ophelia. Branagh, however, removes the uncertainty surrounding the possibility of her death being suicide, as his Ophelia is shown to have concealed a key to the padded cell in which she is being held, with the understanding that her intentions to escape and kill herself are clear.

Branagh's use of flashbacks, however, is not innocent, and, as his presentation of the death of Ophelia establishes, the interpolated visual material does more than 'flesh out' Shakespeare's reported action by means of the apparently random use of point-of-view in these sequences, which, as Harris argues, 'becomes not only ambiguous, but confusing', and 'gives not a variety of imaginings, or space for the imaginings of the viewer, but a controlled imagining that supports Hamlet's interpretation of events – or rather Branagh's' (Harris, 81-2). The perspective cannot be identified as Hamlet's – in the flashback which confirms the Ghost's report of Gertrude's adultery, for instance, Hamlet is shown walking away from the scene – but it does, as Harris observes, endorse his position with regard to Claudius and his mother. The point-of-view, of course, is Branagh the film-maker's.

The excessive control of Branagh the director over his material is exemplified in the play scene, in which 'Branagh's Hamlet is too intrusive, trying too hard to control' (Harris, 162). He leaves his seat in the audience and jumps down on to the stage while

the players are still performing, disrupting the play, just as Branagh as director keeps interrupting Shakespeare's text in order to supply a visual verification of one report or another: 'Branagh wants so much to give us his interpretation that he leaves us no room for our own, he over-explains, over-manages' (Harris, 96). What is more, '[t]he visual material takes up the viewer's attention to the extent that this "eye" is never questioned' (Harris, 82). Branagh's anxiety to prove his ability and indeed his worthiness to interpret and translate to film Shakespeare's most influential play is manifested in a tendency to spell everything out for the viewer, but this 'use of the camera to show us so much more than Shakespeare told us ... seems restrictive rather than expansive' (Harris, 168): Gertrude was unfaithful, Claudius did murder King Hamlet after seducing the Queen, and therefore Hamlet's mental disturbance and strange, often cruel behaviour are not only warranted but a clear signal of his nobility. The pervasive ambiguity of so many central elements of the text which has kept playgoers fascinated and literary critics busy for so many centuries is all but eliminated by the authorial voice – Branagh's – at work in the film's many visual interpolations.¹⁶

The scene in which the players arrive at Elsinore is exemplary of Branagh's project in making a film of Hamlet, not just in terms of his use of the camera to verify his reading of the text, but also of the constant efforts to render the film culturally definitive. Branagh casts Charlton Heston as the Player King (a title which signifies his role in the film as much as his part in Hamlet), and in the sequence in which he performs the speech recounting the fall of Troy, the events he describes are rendered visually, featuring Sir John Gielgud as Priam and Dame Judi Dench as Hecuba. Heston wears a red coat, and as he speaks the speech, the use of a low angle shot and

a slow zoom in on his face signify his elevated status as a character, but also as a marker of greatness in the film. It is also suggestive that the scenes depicting the fall of Troy and the death of Priam are visually reminiscent of the Hollywood epics which earned Heston his reputation: this seems to be another effort to add cultural weight to the production. In this scene, Branagh plays Hamlet, who is moved to tears by the speech, but he also plays Kenneth Branagh the film-maker, who renders the dramatic speech in concrete filmic terms, and Kenneth Branagh the *Shakespearean* film-maker, who adds authenticity to his project by casting Heston, Gielgud, and Dench.

When Polonius interrupts with 'This is too long' (2.2.489), the evocative background music is cut off and the atmosphere broken. He is silenced by Hamlet just as Branagh would silence his critics, and it is the latter's very gentle delivery of 'Say on, come to Hecuba' (491-2) that restores the mood shattered by Polonius the philistine. Just as Shakespeare's scene considers the relationship between actors and the theatre on the one hand and their audience on the other, so Branagh uses this sequence as a disquisition on the enterprise of Shakespearean film-making. To put it baldly, his primary concerns are with casting a particular kind of actor to speak Shakespeare's language, and with rendering that language in concrete visual terms.

Most importantly, for the purposes of this discussion, Branagh's decision to use the conflated Q2 and First Folio texts in many ways represents a failure to construct a response to Hamlet, or at least an evasion of that task.¹⁷ While both Olivier and Zeffirelli constructed readings of Hamlet which bear particular emphases, Branagh's emphasis is on the textuality of Hamlet. What this represents, then, is a different category of response from those discussed in relation to the films of Olivier and

Zeffirelli. While Olivier's and Zeffirelli's constitute readings produced through an interaction with the text of Hamlet, and in the context of the dialectic of responses to Hamlet produced within the interpretive community of twentieth-century post-Freudian readers, Branagh's film is a reading paralysed by the inherited assumptions about Shakespeare of the late twentieth-century Western interpretive community: it is as much a response to the cultural capital of Shakespeare and Hamlet as it is a reading of the text. As the above account of the portrayal of the Hamlet-Ophelia relationship, and of the relationship of Gertrude and Claudius prior to the death of King Hamlet, suggests, Branagh's Hamlet does achieve a series of readings of localised moments in the text, but as a complete document its reading is dominated and ultimately paralysed by issues pertaining to the cultural weight and capital of the Hamlet text, which Branagh takes to inhere in the Shakespearean word. As Julie Sanders observes,

in his drive towards making something definitive and life-enhancing, Branagh's film, despite numerous strengths and local insights, results in being politically and ethically fissured and, at times, simply confusing. His screenplay seems irretrievably torn between lamenting a lost ideal of imperial power and conducting a critique of political dictatorship. It indicts the cruelties of a governmental system that destroys the fragile individualism of a Hamlet or an Ophelia, whilst appearing seduced by the same.

(Burnett and Wray, 162)

The decision to film a full, conflated text inadvertently results in the relegation of questions of response and interpretation to the status of secondary concerns.

In order to signal the extent to which an overzealous veneration of Shakespeare may paralyse a response to the text, I will briefly deviate from my discussion of films of Hamlet. Where Branagh's film fundamentally comprises an evasion of the question of

responding to the Shakespearean text, or at least a kind of paralysis in the face of the task, Al Pacino's Looking for Richard is a Shakespeare film which comprehensively fails to achieve a reading of or a response to the Shakespearean text, because, indeed, this is not really Pacino's goal. Ostensibly, Looking for Richard is about the making of a film of Richard III. Along with Al Pacino, who plays Richard of Gloucester and directs Looking for Richard, the film exclusively stars American actors, including Alec Baldwin, Kevin Spacey, and Winona Ryder, and features American actor and director Frederick Kimball as the director of the play within the film. It cuts between scenes in the rehearsal room and clips from the 'actual' film, between opinions about Shakespeare from people on the street and interviews with English actors and academics about acting Shakespeare and reading Richard III. The film asks 'what is Richard III about?', exploring the play from the perspective of actors and audience, but this project is essentially stalled by the film's anxiety in the face of the monumentality of the Shakespearean text, and in particular over the question of whether or not Americans have access to that text.

In making Looking for Richard, Al Pacino asserts that his goal is 'to communicate a Shakespeare that is about how we think and how we feel today'. Pacino's metonymic reference to Richard III as 'a Shakespeare' is symptomatic of the way the film treats Shakespeare as a cultural construct, and not just as a 'promising Elizabethan playwright', as Hawkes puts it. A 'Shakespeare' is not merely a playscript which may be used as the starting point for mounting a theatrical or filmic production – it is a signifier which carries with it an array of cultural associations and indicators. Shakespeare's name has become a complex signifier of culture, and Looking for Richard, which could properly be called Looking for Shakespeare, attempts to

identify the signified for which Shakespeare's name is a signifier, and then to communicate that signified to an American audience.

It seems that Pacino meant this film to democratise Richard III, and Shakespeare, and in particular to validate American readings and productions of the plays. He asks: 'what is that thing that gets between us [Americans] and Shakespeare?' The entire film tends to be fraught with anxiety over this question, and, mostly unintentionally, it proposes the answer that it is culture, or Englishness, that gets between Americans and Shakespeare. From the outset of the film, it is clear that Pacino is attempting to reconcile what he seems to see as the contradiction of being an American actor in America trying to make a film of a play about English political history written by the playwright who represents the cornerstone of English literature and whose name may be used almost as a synonym for English culture, or for Culture-as-Englishness. One of the means by which Pacino attempts to overcome his anxiety at being an American doing Shakespeare is to locate his reading of the play in 'Englishness'. He and Kimball go to the pseudo-medieval cloisters of a museum in America to rehearse Richard's opening speech in the hope that the surroundings will create the historical atmosphere of the play, which will in turn influence and enhance their reading of the scene. Pacino calls it 'the method thing'. (The desire for this kind of environmental integrity does not, however, extend to Pacino removing his baseball cap and dark glasses). Pacino and Kimball even travel to England in search of the essence of Shakespeare: they visit the site of the rebuilding of the now completed Globe Theatre in London; they go to Stratford-on-Avon, and are surprisingly disappointed at not experiencing an epiphany on entering the bedroom at Henley Street where Shakespeare was supposed to have been born. Pacino also interviews a number of

prominent English Shakespearean actors, notably Sir John Gielgud, Derek Jacobi, and Kenneth Branagh, all of whom offer what seem to me to be rather banal observations and advice on playing Shakespeare. Vanessa Redgrave, for instance, explains iambic pentameter like this: 'Shakespeare's iambics floated and descended through the pentameter of the soul'.

Pacino's film also manifests the same kind of anxiety in the face of the cultural weight attaching to the Shakespearean text that Branagh's Hamlet experiences. Although Looking for Richard concentrates on actors and performance, it is made clear that Shakespeare exists primarily as a book. The opening section of the film is laden with shots of books, which function to establish Shakespeare as literature and Richard III as a piece of writing. At an early reading of the play, Pacino is working from an immense volume of The Complete Works of Shakespeare which is, he acknowledges, so heavy that he can barely lift it, and this big, unwieldy book operates (unintentionally, no doubt) as a visual metaphor for the anxiety which Pacino feels about Shakespeare's being deeply embedded in the literary canon and the European high cultural tradition, just as Hamlet's book-lined study in Branagh's film signifies that the heart of Hamlet's mystery is to be found in the text. Pacino's anxiety is not, of course, independent of questions of culture and Englishness, and Pacino addresses this problem by interviewing a couple of English academics about what it is that Richard III is about, what Shakespeare was on about when he wrote it, and what the play means. The question of what the play 'means' is at the heart of Pacino's anxiety. He is working on the assumption that the play has some sort of stable, unified meaning that he would be able to identify were he not suffering from the condition of being an American and therefore having no access to the culture Shakespeare

embodies, which inheres in Englishness and the past. It is this misapprehension which ultimately prevents the film from arriving at and presenting or ‘communicating’ a reading of Richard III ‘that is about how we think and how we feel today’.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of response from Pacino’s film is the Hamlet sequence in The Last Action Hero. This film, directed by John McTiernan and released in 1992, is essentially a deconstruction of the action film genre, in which Arnold Schwarzenegger plays Jack Slater, a character based on Schwarzenegger’s own on-screen persona. The hero of the piece is a boy called Danny, who is Jack Slater’s biggest fan. The Hamlet sequence occurs near the beginning of the film: Danny has reluctantly turned up for school, only to discover that his teacher, played self-parodyingly by Olivier’s widow Joan Plowright, is showing the class Olivier’s Hamlet. Danny is so frustrated by Hamlet’s hesitancy in the prayer scene that he imaginatively rewrites the film, casting Jack Slater as Hamlet the bazooka-wielding action hero who kills Claudius and then blows up Elsinore, muttering: ‘To be or not to be ... Not to be’. Danny’s response to Olivier’s Hamlet is so full and participatory, and so comfortably positioned in historical and cultural terms, that his reading of the film constitutes not so much a response as an appropriative refashioning which illustrates Hawkes’s point that ‘[o]ur “Shakespeare” is our invention: to read him is to write him’ (1986, 124).

What is more, the fantasy sequence in which Olivier is replaced by Arnold Schwarzenegger as Hamlet is also indicative of the popular perception of (Olivier as) Hamlet as a man of inaction, and of Zeffirelli’s film as in some ways the action film version of Hamlet, which the Schwarzenegger Hamlet surely parodies. As well as

modelling a different kind of response, this time the response of a character within the filmic narrative, The Last Action Hero's appropriation of Olivier's Hamlet and its reference to Zeffirelli's Hamlet are evidence of the currency of the kinds of cultural meanings understood by the interpretive community of late twentieth-century Western film-goers.

I would like to conclude, therefore, not by predicting the kinds of responses a student of Shakespeare might produce, but rather by reiterating from the above discussion some of the cultural materials available to the student reader-responder in the process of constructing meaning from the Shakespearean text. Just as Danny, whose youth and personality renders him impatient with Olivier's introspective Hamlet, brings his comprehensive and relatively sophisticated knowledge of the action genre to bear on the film, so students of Shakespeare will interpret Hamlet in the context of their own experiences and intuitions. Their reading of Shakespeare will also import certain beliefs about Shakespeare and about Hamlet from the interpretive community of their socio-cultural environment, in particular those beliefs pertaining to Shakespeare's cultural capital and perpetuated by the institutions of education, 'serious' or mainstream theatre, and, more recently, film: as Herrnstein Smith argues,

evaluation operates as a characteristic activity not only of individuals but of institutions and culture [W]e are ... more likely to engage with a text in ways that yield certain meanings – say, broadly philosophical or specifically historical or ideological ones – if its value has already been marked for us in certain ways ... and our expectations of its effects are directed and limited accordingly.

(Lentricchia and McLaughlin, 182)

The films of Branagh and Pacino in particular are examples of the burden of prior evaluations that a reader brings to a text and, in these cases, the subsequently limited or constrained capacity to construct meaning from that text. Moreover the texts I have discussed above, both the 'classical' Shakespeare films such as the Hamlets of Olivier, Zeffirelli, and Branagh, and films like Pacino's Looking for Richard and McTiernan's The Last Action Hero, which comment on or allude to the position and endurance of Shakespeare and Hamlet in Western culture, are also cultural materials which students may deploy in the process of meaning by Shakespeare. I will take up the question of certain other cultural influences which come to bear on the reading of Shakespeare in the following chapters, beginning in Chapter Five with a consideration of feminist criticism and the influence of the body of social and cultural assumptions about women on the literary critical and dramatic interpretation of Shakespeare's women characters.

¹ See M.H. Abrams's A Glossary of Literary Terms (6th or later edition) for definitions of New Criticism, New Historicism, humanism, aestheticism, canon formation, and Cultural Materialism.

² In her foreword to the 1995 edition of Literature as Exploration Rosenblatt explains that the book was first written in the 1930s, when attention to pronouns and non-gender-specific language was not a matter of pressing importance, and she deemed it too great a task to change her generic use of the masculine pronoun for later editions.

³ This film was released on video in some countries under the title A Midwinter's Tale, but I shall refer to it throughout by the title of its initial cinema release.

⁴ The film tends also to romanticise the actors' community as a 'family': one character enjoys feeling 'needed', another learns not to turn to drink after Joe tells him 'he doesn't need to', and a third overcomes his homophobia and becomes mates with Terry the queen.

⁵ Jack Jorgens, in Shakespeare on Film, describes three modes available to the Shakespearean film-maker. The most popularly employed is the 'realistic mode', which takes advantage of the camera's ability to show us the things about Shakespeare's verse only tells us. The perceived problems with this mode are that it renders much of the visually evocative material of Shakespeare's plays redundant and that, as Jorgens asserts, 'poetic drama does not thrive on photographic realism' (8). Jorgens's answer to the contradiction between poetic language and the visual realism of film is what he calls the 'filmic mode', which is 'the mode of the film poet, whose works bear the same relation to the surfaces of reality that poems do to ordinary conversation' (10). This mode stresses the artifice of film and is emphatically visual. Physical and visual realism is not the aim, but rather the visual equivalent of poetic imagery. Jorgens claims that 'the filmic mode is the truest to the effect of Shakespeare's dramatic verse' (12). The third of the modes described by Jorgens is the 'theatrical mode'. Films in this mode look and feel like a production worked out for a static theatrical space. Extended mid- and long-shots stress the durational quality of time characteristic of a stage production, and minimise the film-maker's control of what the viewer sees. The frame acts like a proscenium, allowing meaning to be generated largely through words and gestures, rather than by filmic visual detail and film techniques such as the reaction shot.

⁶ The task of analysing the cultural significance, effects, and uses of the Shakespearean text has been the project of such critics as Terence Hawkes (Meaning by Shakespeare, London and New York: Routledge, 1992; That Shakespeareian Rag, London and New York: Methuen, 1986), Thomas Cartelli (Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations, London and New York: Routledge, 1999), and Michael D. Bristol (Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare, London and New York: Routledge, 1990; Big-Time Shakespeare, London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁷ Stanley E. Fish. Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.

⁸ Some critics use reception-theory as a synonym for reader-response theory.

⁹ Jones first published an essay on Hamlet and Freud in 1910, and the fact that Hamlet and Oedipus was not published until 1949 indicates the enduring currency of Jones's argument. Olivier met with Jones while preparing for the 1937 production of Hamlet at the Old Vic (Donaldson, 103).

¹⁰ Commentators have noted the indebtedness of this scene to the opening of Peter Brook's film of King Lear: see, for example, Hapgood (88).

¹¹ A further similarity between the two versions of the closet scene is that both use the identical device of the miniatures, one worn by Hamlet and the other by Gertrude. Branagh's film, by contrast, uses a hinged picture frame with King Hamlet's picture in one half and Claudius's in the other, unintentionally registering a symbolic difference in scale.

¹² All but the last line of this prologue is borrowed from 1.4 of the Q2 version of Hamlet; the last line is Olivier's addition.

¹³ Jones argues that

[t]he whole picture presented by Hamlet, his deep depression, the hopeless note in his attitude towards the world and towards the value of life, his dread of death, his repeated reference to bad dreams, his self-accusations, his desperate efforts to get away from the thoughts of his duty, and his vain attempts to find an excuse for his procrastination: all this unequivocally points to a *tortured conscience*, to some hidden ground for shirking his task, a ground which he dare not or cannot avow to himself The long 'repressed' desire to take his father's place in his mother's affection is stimulated to unconscious activity by

the sight of someone usurping this place exactly as he himself had once longed to do Without his being in the least aware of it these ancient desires are ringing in his mind, are once more struggling to find conscious expression, and need such an expenditure of energy again to 'repress' them that he is reduced to the deplorable mental state he himself so vividly depicts.

(57, 82)

¹⁴ Thomas Betterton, 1635-1710.

¹⁵ Murphy goes on to describe Branagh's Hamlet in this way:

We might say that this is a production which, in terms of textual scholarship, has hardly yet reached beyond the bounds of a kind of crude version of New Bibliography. Branagh's mission in presenting 'for the first time, the full unabridged text of Shakespeare's Hamlet' seems have been to gather together every scrap of text which might conceivably be attributed to Shakespeare as author and to present this is all its copiousness as the most fully authentic version of the play. In the process, he ignores those revisionist arguments which suggest that we have inherited two distinct versions of Hamlet, each differently inflected by the revising playwright. He also ignores those more radical commentators who would lay stress on the complexity of the play as a social object, multiply fashioned and refashioned, and never securely locatable as the sole and exclusive product and property of a singular, centralized author.

(Burnett and Wray, 13)

¹⁶ Although Branagh's use of flashbacks is excessive and, as Harris puts it, often restrictive, the interpolated material is sometimes made to serve more specific agenda than the visual fleshing out of verbal description: for example, I will argue in Chapter Five that the use of flashbacks featuring Ophelia is in the service of a feminist disruption of the portrayal of the women characters.

¹⁷ Moreover, in providing the primary topic for discussion among critics and commentators, the question of the text has served to divert attention away from other aspects of the film's interpretation of Shakespeare's text.

Chapter 5

‘She turned to folly, and she was a whore’:¹

Shakespeare, Feminist Criticism, and Film

Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which share three major perceptions: that gender is a social construction which oppresses women more than men; that patriarchy shapes this construction; and that women’s experiential knowledge is a basis for a future non-sexist society.

(Humm, x)

The work of feminist critics represents one of the most significant contributions to Shakespearean scholarship in recent decades, particularly in the years since 1975, when, in Shakespeare and the Nature of Women, Juliet Dusinberre claimed that Shakespeare was a feminist. Feminist criticism within and beyond the realm of Shakespearean scholarship also aligns itself and engages with many other fields of literary and critical theory, including psychoanalysis, deconstruction, cultural materialism, and new historicism, such as the ‘materialist feminism’ of critics like Dymphna Callaghan and others (Callaghan, Helms and Singh, 2)², to which I shall have particular recourse in this chapter.

Given the prevalence, power, and broad scope of feminist criticism, it is surprising and disconcerting to discover to what a limited extent it has permeated and influenced the teaching and examination of Shakespeare in New Zealand. The New Zealand Curriculum Framework states that ‘[i]n selecting authors and texts, schools will have regard to gender balance’ (Ministry of Education 1993, 10), and English in the New

Zealand Curriculum includes a section entitled 'The Gender-inclusive Curriculum' which insists not only that boys and girls should have 'equitable access to resources', but also that '[t]he experiences and values of both girls and boys should be included. Texts should include and reflect the achievements, interests, and perspectives of girls, women, boys, and men' (Ministry of Education 1994, 13). Such a decree rightly calls for gender balance in the compilation of reading lists, although it negates or at least postpones to a considerable extent the potential implementation of the principles of feminist criticism, requiring that the set texts for study already represent balance and equality in their treatment and portrayal of gender. A reading list compiled along these lines may tend to defer or bypass the task of examining a text in terms of the ways in which it presents and perpetuates or challenges prevailing ideas about gender and gender relations, in the sense that the emphasis is placed on what kinds of texts are read, rather than on the way in which they are read. With this in mind, the study of the works of Shakespeare, which were produced out of a profoundly patriarchal culture, becomes an even more important site for the introduction of feminist criticism.

English in the New Zealand Curriculum also states, under 'Responding to Text', that '[s]tudents should understand that each text reflects a particular viewpoint and set of values which are shaped by its social or historical context' (16). As I observed in Chapter Four, this statement broadly represents the work of new historicism, and it may be seen to stand in, albeit weakly, for certain aspects of feminist criticism as well. The viewpoint and values of early modern England are certainly important factors in the feminist reading of Shakespeare, but this statement falls well short of advocating any real feminist position in the reading of Shakespeare or any other text

on the syllabus. Nor do the questions in the Shakespeare section of the University Entrance and Bursaries Examination require any consideration of the perspective or methodology of feminist criticism in the teaching and studying of the plays, tending to ask nothing more radical than the occasional question on women characters which may readily be answered without any reference to a feminist position. That an expansion of the vaguely feminist gesturings of English in the New Zealand Curriculum is necessary needs hardly to be stated, and my goal in this chapter will be to illustrate the ways in which Shakespearean film may be deployed in the service of a feminist-oriented, or what could more usefully be called a gender studies programme, for the classroom.

Despite the overt political agenda of much feminist criticism, it is important to acknowledge that introducing a feminist position in the classroom need not necessarily lead to an adversarial environment in a co-educational classroom, or indeed any classroom:

A feminist reader does not necessarily read in order to praise or to blame, to judge or to censor. More commonly she sets out to assess how the text invites its readers, as members of a specific culture, to understand what it means to be a woman or a man, and so encourages them to reaffirm or to challenge existing cultural norms.

(Belsey and Moore, 1)

Belsey and Moore suggest by their use of pronouns that a feminist reader is female, and it is not my intention here to enter into the debate as to whether or not a male critic may label himself a feminist: rather, I propose that a feminist-oriented critical practice or a gender studies approach need not nor should not exclude male students.

Indeed, as Belsey and Moore assert, feminism in its later, materialist-influenced form, is as much concerned with cultural definitions of man as of woman.

It is important to begin by briefly outlining the fundamental premises of feminist criticism, and to delineate the position from which I will be working in this chapter. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely provide a useful working definition from which to proceed:

Feminist criticism is more a matter of perspective than of subject matter or gender. Feminists assume that women are equal to men but that their roles, more often than men's and in different ways, have been restricted, stereotyped, and minimized; their aim is to free women from oppressive constraints Feminist critics are profoundly concerned with understanding the parts women have played, do play, and might play in literature as well as in culture.

(Lenz, Greene and Neely, 3)

Belsey and Moore similarly state that 'the feminist reader might ask, among other questions, how the text represents women, what it says about gender relations, how it defines sexual difference A criticism which ignores these issues implies that they do not matter' (1). Feminist criticism, therefore, is essentially concerned with identifying and exposing the ways in which the marginalisation of women has been effected, in life as well as in literature, and with liberating women from their marginalised position.

Belsey and Moore observe that 'from its conception feminism has been continually under revision' (14), and Maggie Humm broadly outlines the key phases of the development and revision of feminist criticism. Humm begins her account with the

second wave feminism of the late 1960s, in which ‘the notion of *origin*, of the significance of male or female authorship, was a key feature of feminist criticism. Second wave feminism is often characterized as the break with the fathers’ (xii). In particular, these critics ‘focused on sexist vocabulary and gender stereotypes in the work of male authors and highlighted the ways in which these writers commonly ascribe particular features, such as “hysteria” and “passivity”, only to women’ (xii). One of the major achievements of second wave feminism was ‘to place literature in historical and social frameworks and point to the gendered, and sometimes sexist, features of those frames. The conventions of literary representations, second wave critics claimed, were as misogynistic as the social conventions on which literature draws. In this sense second wave feminists set out a whole new agenda for literary criticism by suggesting affinities between social and literary discourses’ (3). Second wave feminist criticism has had a significant impact on the reading and interpretation of Shakespeare’s plays, identifying in particular the dichotomous representation of women’s sexuality in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, which system of representation tends to portray women only as virgins or as whores, and which obtains from the socially definitive discursive practices of early modern England.

In the 1970s, Humm continues, ‘feminist criticism grew into a new phase, often called gynocriticism or the study of women writers and women identified themes’ (xii). It is this brand of feminist criticism that English in the New Zealand Curriculum most clearly acknowledges in its call for attention to gender balance in reading lists and classroom practice. However, gynocriticism is not feminism’s final word, and Humm goes on to describe the influence of poststructuralism on feminist criticism, which led to an emphasis in the 1980s, after the work of Jacques Derrida and Luce

Irigaray, among others, on the ways in which ‘the universalism of binaries such as man/woman, culture/nature, in which “woman” was the inferior term, led to women’s language ... lying mute in patriarchy’ (xii).³

Shakespeare on film may successfully be deployed to activate in the classroom reading strategies like those outlined above, and it will be my project in this chapter not only to discuss the ways in which women characters are represented in Shakespearean films through the analysis of three versions of Hamlet, but to demonstrate how even films made at the end of the twentieth century continue to see and depict women, as Callaghan puts it, as ‘the bearers, not the makers of meaning’ (Callaghan [2000 a], 15). In Shakespeare Without Women, Callaghan argues that it is misleading to assume that the appearance of the actress on the Restoration stage necessarily represented progress in feminist terms because ‘*presence cannot be equated with representation any more than representation can be equated with inclusion*’ (Callaghan [2000 a], 9; Callaghan’s italics). Nor is the casting of actresses to play the women characters in Shakespearean films any guarantee of a feminist perspective. It is the question of representation that I want to address in this chapter, deploying feminist criticism to analyse the kinds of representation Gertrude and Ophelia are accorded in three films of Hamlet. In particular I will be concerned with the subject-positions which the discursive habits of each film permit the women characters.

I mentioned in Chapter One the critical and theoretical limitations which an emphasis on character can place on the study of Shakespeare, citing Michael Hattaway’s remarks on what he rightly perceives to be a prevalent approach to the

study of character, in which the goal or outcome of character analysis tends to be ‘all too often merely a series of character sketches’ (38). Such an approach involves not analysis but description of characters, usually emphasising those qualities which are most recognisable within the reader’s frame of experience, and is one of the hallmarks of liberal humanist criticism. Belsey explains the ubiquity of this approach, arguing that the predominant critical tradition of an illusionist era in the dramatic arts, whose fiction constitutes ‘an empirical replica rather than an emblematic representation’ of the world, ‘[i]nvariably ... has read Shakespeare and his contemporaries in quest of illusionism, most obviously to find the representation of humanist subjects, “characters”’ (Belsey 1985, 23, 33). This trend persists to the present day, and the quest for the illusionistic representation of real life in the plays of Shakespeare is the prevailing habit of a secondary school classroom practice which is based on a belief in Shakespeare’s universalism. But, as Callaghan boldly observes, ‘we have to remind ourselves that no matter how much we feel Shakespeare represents all of us he had never heard tell of us, [and] did not write for us’ (Callaghan [2000 a], 9).

In order to move beyond a Shakespearean scholarship which seeks to discover the mirror of ourselves reflected in the plays, it is helpful to give some consideration to the nature of fiction itself: as Belsey writes in The Subject of Tragedy, ‘[f]ictional texts do not necessarily mirror the practices prevalent in a social body, but they are a rich repository of the meanings its members understand and contest’ (1985, 5). In other words, we should not expect the dramatic character to equate with the social subject, but rather we should analyse character in terms of what it can reveal as a representation of the kinds of meaning, particularly meanings pertaining to the nature of subjectivity, which were part of the discursive practices out of which various

fictional texts were produced, and of which those texts form a part. Thus Hattaway's observation on character, which implicitly calls for a shift from the study of character to the study of *characterisation*, eschewing the 'concentration on personality' in favour of an approach which pays attention to 'external realities and the ways in which individual consciousness or individuality may be a product of these realities' (38), proposes a form of character-based analysis which acknowledges that '[s]ubjectivity is discursively produced and is constrained by the range of subject-positions defined by the discourses in which the concrete individual participates' (1985, 5). Hattaway's distinction between character and characterisation emphasises the way in which characterisation functions as a representation of the discursive and institutional formation of subjectivity and, for the purposes of this chapter, of the construction of women characters as the 'bearers ... of meaning'.

My concern in this chapter will be with the school of feminist criticism that has moved beyond a consideration of women characters as people drawn from life to an interrogation of the structures which have served to determine the position of and the dominant attitudes towards women in various socio-cultural environments. As Callaghan writes,

[f]eminist Shakespeareans are ... interested in how the plays may reflect real women as well as how they help produce and reproduce ideas about women that shape, perpetuate, or even disturb prevailing conditions of femininity. For 'woman' is never an already accomplished, cold, hard, self-evident fact or category, but always a malleable cultural idea as well as a lived reality.

(Callaghan [2000 b], xii)

Elsewhere Callaghan notes that 'feminism is not just the idea that women should be equal to men but a radical interrogation of all the categories ... which constitute the

epistemological structures and power relations of our history' (Callaghan [2000 a], 8), while Jyotsna Singh provides an eloquent example of the way in which such a feminist position may be applied:

when Emilia questions why Othello must call Desdemona 'whore', her voice is lost in the male drama of jealousy and a fear of cuckoldry. Our role as feminist historians and literary critics is not simply to recover her voice – to speak for her, so to speak – but more importantly, to disrupt *the categories of representation* accepted by Othello, Iago, Cassio, and others, and that in different manifestations continue to oppress women today.

(Callaghan, Helms, and Singh, 51; Singh's italics)

One of the 'categories of representation' to which Singh refers is the virgin-whore dichotomy. Paula S. Berggren observes that 'the women in tragedy seem to split into two basic types: victims or monsters, "good" or "evil"' (Lenz, Greene and Neely, 18), and this position, which was fundamental to the second-wave feminism described above, formed the basis of many early feminist readings of Hamlet.

My focus in this chapter, then, will be the representation of woman as a 'cultural idea', as Callaghan puts it, with women characters as repositories of social and cultural meaning, not as mirror images or empirical replicas of 'real' people. I am interested in what the dramatic character, and in this case, the mediated filmic interpretation of early modern women characters, tells us about the construction of subjectivity, about the way in which the fictional character is a product of the dominant discursive practices pertaining to subjectivity and particularly to female subjectivity. Feminist criticism has paid close attention to what the construction of the women characters in Hamlet reveals about prevailing attitudes to women and to female sexuality in early modern England. My concern in this chapter will be with the

ways in which three twentieth-century films of Hamlet reinterpret Gertrude and Ophelia in relation to the broader social project of feminism, and with how developments may be traced through the application of different models of literary-critical feminism.

Lenz, Greene and Neely observe that '[m]ost contemporary films of Hamlet ... present a lascivious Gertrude, taking their cue from Hamlet's fantasies of her instead of from an analysis of her decorous, bewildered lines'(5), and Rebecca Smith similarly asserts that 'Gertrude prompts violent physical and emotional reactions from the men in the play, and most stage and film directors – like Olivier, Kozintsev, and Richardson – have simply taken the men's words and created a Gertrude based on their reactions' (Lenz, Greene and Neely, 194). Lenz, Greene, and Neely suggest that a feminist perspective would acknowledge that 'Gertrude and Ophelia are characters who have an existence and importance beyond Hamlet's perceptions of them' (4). Whether or not these characters may ever be fully liberated from their imaginative, social, and dramatic possession by the male characters of Hamlet is another question, and one that I shall address by reference to the three films of the play discussed in Chapter Four: Olivier's (1948), Zeffirelli's (1990), and Branagh's (1996).

In particular, I shall seek to trace the progression from the second wave feminist emphasis on the dichotomous portrayal of women in early modern drama, which position may be readily applied to Olivier's Hamlet, to a materialist feminist position, which interrogates the discursive and institutional systems and structures which function to define and control femininity. Branagh's Hamlet provides a useful example for the deployment of this theoretical position in its Foucauldian

representation of the policing of Ophelia's madness, which is an example of those systems which seek to determine what it is to be, in this case, mad, but in broader terms, what it means to be a woman. In Branagh's film, the cruel Victorian methods for the treatment of the insane to which Ophelia is subjected stand in for the true instrument of her oppression in Hamlet: patriarchy. This progression from second wave to materialist feminism may be traced by a reading of Zeffirelli's Hamlet, which moves beyond the emblematic portrayal of Gertrude and Ophelia as whore and virgin respectively and allows both characters a measure of agency, but which does not substantially attempt to interrogate the systems which confine and define them. I shall begin my discussion in 1948, with Olivier.

Olivier's film of Hamlet announces its unwavering androcentricity from its very first moments. Borrowing a speech from 1.4 of the Second Quarto version of Hamlet (and making some characteristic revisions), Olivier begins his film with a voice-over on the natures of men:

So oft it chances in particular men
 That through some vicious mole of nature in them
 ...
 By the o'ergrowth of some complexion
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
 Or by some habit [grown too much] – that these men,
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
 ...
 [Their] virtues else – be they as pure as grace,
 ...
 Shall in the general censure take corruption
 From that particular fault.⁴

To this speech, however, Olivier adds a line: 'This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind'. As I discussed in Chapter Four, this prologue and its summary final line are symptomatic of Olivier's Freudian reading of the play under the influence of British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones. What is significant for my argument in this chapter is Jones's contention, based on Freud, that the reason for this man's inability to make up his mind is, of course, woman. Jones lays the responsibility for Hamlet's indecision and inaction squarely at the door of the incestuous Gertrude,⁵ and the *mise-en-scène* of Olivier's film reproduces and accentuates this position. Moreover, the final line of the voice-over prologue accompanies a shot of the dead Hamlet, borne by four soldiers and accompanied by Horatio, and it is clear from the outset that Hamlet's indecision, for which Gertrude is ultimately responsible, will prove fatal.

Rebecca Smith observes that

[i]n the Olivier Hamlet (1948), the dramatic symbol for Gertrude is a luxurious canopied bed. This bed is one of the first and last images on the screen and emphasizes both Gertrude's centrality in the play and Olivier's interpretation of the centrality of sexual appetite in Gertrude's nature. Even her relationship with her son is tinged with sexuality.⁶

(Lenz, Greene and Neely, 195)

However, a closer examination of Olivier's use of the camera reveals a far more specific agenda regarding the nature of Gertrude's sexuality and its centrality to his interpretation of Hamlet. The opening scene of the film, in which Barnardo, Marcellus and Horatio witness the walking of the ghost of King Hamlet on the battlements of Elsinore, concludes with Marcellus's line, borrowed from a later scene, 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' (1.4.65). Immediately following this line of dialogue

the three characters all turn to look to their left, and the camera, following the direction of their gaze, begins an extensive panning shot through the chambers and corridors of Elsinore, introducing us to the locations, like Ophelia's chamber, and objects, like Hamlet's chair in the state chamber, which will become significant as the narrative unfolds. This long pan crucially ends in Gertrude's chamber with a shot of the large canopied bed described by Smith: the specific arrangement of Marcellus's line of dialogue and the shot of Gertrude's bed at either end of the extended pan serves to convey the notion that what is rotten in the state of Denmark is the sexuality of the Queen. In this way, Gertrude is introduced in the film not as a woman, as the Queen of Denmark or as Hamlet's mother, but as the embodiment of sexuality, and a dangerous, destructive sexuality at that. Just as Berggren asserts that the women characters in the tragedies tend to line up on either side of the angel-monster division, so, before she has even uttered a line, Olivier's film accords Gertrude the status of Eve in the virgin-whore dichotomy, identified by second wave feminist criticism as prevalent in early modern thinking about women's sexuality.

If Gertrude is represented in Olivier's Elsinore by her over-large bed, Ophelia's symbolic location is an empty chamber at the end of a long corridor. Olivier frequently uses the technique of the extended moving shot to make connections and associations in the film, and the first time we meet Ophelia the camera tracks from a close-up of Hamlet's head down the passage-way into her chamber, where the doorway is blocked by the imposing figure of her brother who approaches from the other direction and gets there before us. Just as Laertes intends his advice in 1.3 to create an obstacle between Hamlet and Ophelia, so his physical presence proves a symbolic barrier to Hamlet's imaginative journey into Ophelia's bedroom.

Ophelia's circular bedchamber is light and sunny, and, unlike the rest of Elsinore's interiors, its walls are adorned with a floral pattern. The room has two open doorways and a large window, but it is almost completely devoid of furniture – there is certainly no sign of a bed. The contrast between this room and Gertrude's, which is completely dominated by the enormous canopied bed, is obvious. Ophelia's room prefigures her depiction in Olivier's film: she is pretty and decorative, but empty. The absence of a bed signals her virginity and her sexual innocence, as do her white gown and unbound golden hair. In the scene in which Polonius lectures Laertes, Ophelia follows behind them, playing with her brother's clothing and fingering his purse with an innocent playfulness designed to convey her sexual naïveté, and it is this, even more than her virginity, which attracts Hamlet to her in Olivier's version. While, as Valerie Traub argues,⁷ the male characters of Hamlet are concerned to contain the sexuality of the women in the play, the two doorways without doors and the open window of Ophelia's bedroom signal that there is no need for containment here: Ophelia's virginity is here an absence of sexuality. As this film presents her, Ophelia is truly at the opposite end of the spectrum from Gertrude: she is a virgin while the Queen is a whore, and more importantly she is utterly naïve in matters of sexuality while Gertrude is characterised by sexual voracity.

Deborah Cartmell argues that Jean Simmons's Ophelia is 'visually far too young to be taken seriously' (28), but this is to my mind a drastic under-reading of Olivier's depiction of Ophelia. His film takes pains to construct her as the representation of an absence of sexuality and of agency, as an empty room. An example is the sequence in which Olivier provides visual accompaniment to Ophelia's speech which begins: 'as I

was sewing in my chamber' (2.1.78-101). The sequence starts with a close-up of Ophelia, and as her voice-over proceeds an image appears in the corner of the screen like a thought bubble, which merges with the flashback.⁸ It is not clear to whom Ophelia is speaking until the end of the sequence, when it is revealed that she is not talking to anyone, and that this is merely a romantic reminiscence. The obedient report of a frightened and frustrated young woman to her father is thus transformed into the dreamy musing of a romantic girl, and the sexual power of Hamlet's visit to Ophelia is all but eradicated. Moreover Olivier's performance as Hamlet is an exact replica of Ophelia's report, which minimises the importance of Ophelia's interpretation of his actions, and reduces her from a thinking and intuitive observer to a mere reporter: by contrast, Kate Winslet as Ophelia in Branagh's Hamlet mimes Hamlet's actions as she describes them, as though trying to participate in his experience.

Ophelia's role in Olivier's nunnery scene is also pared back almost to nothing. Her 'O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown' speech (3.1.151-162) is excised, removing one of the strongest expressions of her subjectivity in the play: 'O woe is me / T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see' (ll. 161-2). In this version Hamlet knows from the beginning of the scene all the details of the trap for which Ophelia has been set as bait,⁹ and, in spite of his tenderly and remorsefully whispered 'To a nunnery, go', he leaves Ophelia abandoned and weeping on the stairs for the benefit of his concealed audience. Polonius and Claudius offer little comfort to the distraught Ophelia, since her role as bait is complete, and as the camera zooms out from her prostrate form on the stairs, her physical diminution signals the end of her usefulness to the men in the play. Moreover the nunnery scene is followed in Olivier's screenplay by the 'To be or

not to be' soliloquy, and as the camera moves seamlessly from the tiny figure of Ophelia to an extreme close-up of Hamlet's head, zooming in on his forehead and fading out as though trying to get inside his head, it is made clear that woman is only of subsidiary importance when compared with the noble thoughts of man.

Olivier's film makes it explicit that Ophelia's separation from Hamlet is as much to blame for her madness as the death of her father: during her mad scene, she stands in front of Hamlet's empty chair, stroking the face of its imagined occupant and entreating him to 'Pray, love, remember' (4.5.177). Harris also notes that Olivier's screenplay leaves out 'many of the bawdier verses of her songs to retain the impression of a very innocent and virginal Ophelia' (131), all of which serves to create the impression that her grief at his absence is not sexually frustrated, but romantically disappointed – she is, essentially, a Victorian Ophelia.

Although Simmons's Ophelia briefly gains some nobility during her madness, delivering her final line, 'God [be with] you' (4.5.200), with poignancy and poise, she dies a pretty, Pre-Raphaelite death. Olivier famously based the *mise-en-scène* for the death of Ophelia on John Everett Millais's well-known painting, and the prettiness of the scene recalls the decorative floral motif on the walls of Ophelia's empty room. While Olivier's Hamlet seems genuinely to have loved Ophelia, her function in death, as in life, is decorative and not substantial. Gertrude, on the other hand, is allowed to redeem herself by her death. Eileen Herlie's Gertrude signals a clear awareness that the cup is poisoned, and, as Cartmell argues, 'in the final scene, the Freudian overtones are abandoned for a return to post-war family values. The Queen ... knowingly drinks the poison in an act of supreme sacrifice' (29).¹⁰ What Cartmell

does not observe is that this serves to align Gertrude further with Ophelia: she is destroyed by her knowledge of sexuality and Ophelia by her innocence of it, and the only agency that remains to them once their sexual power is removed is to commit suicide.

The way that the camera abandons the disempowered and distraught Ophelia to seek out Hamlet for the delivery of the play's most famous soliloquy is a useful analogy for Olivier's characterisation of Ophelia and Gertrude: just as Shakespeare's Ophelia is a pawn in Claudius's political agenda, so Olivier's Ophelia and his Gertrude are instrumental in the service of his Freudian (because Jonesian) reading of Hamlet's delay, his study of this 'particular man'. Olivier's Hamlet readily accepts that, in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries,

'woman' becomes synonymous with the presence or absence of chastity

Maid, wife, widow, whore: these are the positions accorded to women in early modern society ... all are defined, not merely by their biological sex, but by their sexual activity.

(Traub, 25-6)

Olivier does not at any point attempt to 'disrupt the categories of representation' identified by second wave feminist critics; his film depicts the women of Hamlet only as bearers of meaning – woman as the destructive presence or attractive absence of sexuality – and Gertrude and Ophelia function as little more than indices to the protagonist's character. Franco Zeffirelli's film of Hamlet, made some forty years later, fortunately represents some progress in feminist terms in the portrayal of Gertrude and Ophelia, although the depiction of the former is in many ways indebted to Olivier.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, Zeffirelli imports the Freudian reading of Gertrude from Olivier's film into his own version of Hamlet. But where Gertrude's sexuality is foregrounded in Olivier's film by the use of the bed as a visual symbol, it is the person of the actress who first establishes the sexual appetite of Zeffirelli's reading of Gertrude. As Cartmell states,

[Glenn Close's] Gertrude dominates the film; she brings to the role shades of her earlier *femme fatale* roles from Adrian Lyne's Fatal Attraction (1987) and Stephen Frears's Dangerous Liaisons (1988). Indeed Close's role as the sexy home-wrecker from Fatal Attraction, whose extreme sexuality leads deservedly to her death, invariably influences readings of her Gertrude. Similarly, [Mel] Gibson's Hamlet is influenced by his earlier action-man roles.

(34)

This is what Charnes labels 'the cultural logic of commodity casting' (7), in that celebrity actors carry with them cultural meanings which accrue to them as a function of the roles with which they are most notably or recently associated. In the case of the stars of Zeffirelli's Hamlet, Mel Gibson brings with him the cultural meanings of the action genre, while Glenn Close imports the spectre of dangerous, indeed fatal, female sexuality, and both these elements are fundamental to Zeffirelli's reading of the play. Zeffirelli's depiction of Gertrude is almost identical to Olivier's in its acceptance of Hamlet's word that a voracious sexuality is her defining characteristic, although it importantly problematises that sexuality by colouring it with a childish innocence.

In my analysis in Chapter Four of the opening scene of Zeffirelli's Hamlet I described the way in which Claudius is shown almost to woo Gertrude over her husband's grave, and the camera very clearly establishes the Queen's susceptibility to Claudius's power and dominant sexuality. Her tears and stooping posture over the

tomb form an eloquent contrast with Claudius's upright stance, dry eyes, and bold gaze. Gertrude's behaviour during the scene in which Claudius announces their marriage to the court reiterates the weak and yielding fascination she feels for her new husband. Throughout Claudius's speech she sits with downcast eyes: she appears nervous, and her breathing is laboured (which may, of course, have other associations too). She does not raise her eyes until Claudius reaches out his hand to her after 'Taken to wife', at which point she looks up at him. The camera shows her in a medium shot as the court stands to applaud the announcement (on Polonius's prompting), and she smiles shyly, but somewhat coyly, and with evident happiness: she is a slightly vacuous blushing bride. Until Hamlet's revelations in the closet scene destroy her illusions, Gertrude is portrayed as excitably girlish, and romantically besotted with Claudius. She is an equal partner in physicality, running to embrace him and returning his kisses with passion.

Zeffirelli goes beyond the scope of Olivier's reading by depicting Gertrude as a still young woman whose early marriage to a much older man has left her immature and unable to define herself without reference to the men who dominate her life, as the strange triangulation which emerges around Gertrude in the opening funeral scene demonstrates: abandoned by her husband, she turns to her son for support in the helplessness of her grief and loss, but leaves herself vulnerable to the manipulative Claudius. Her role in the state is characterised by her deference to Claudius, and she has no sense of her own power and agency except for her sexuality, which she uses to persuade Claudius to make peace with Hamlet at the beginning of the film, and to convince her son not to return to Wittenberg. Her lack of agency is such that her admission that the cause of Hamlet's madness is likely to be 'no other but the main – /

His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage' (2.2.56-7) jars uncomfortably against the immaturity she displays in all other aspects of her behaviour.

The costume worn by Gertrude at Ophelia's funeral bears a striking resemblance to a nun's habit, as though to signify that, while it was too late for Ophelia to 'get [her] to a nunnery', Gertrude's sexuality has been buried along with the unfortunate Ophelia, and this is the moment of her redemption. Gertrude's death in Zeffirelli's film is not the noble sacrifice of a knowing queen but the death of a desperate woman whose eyes have finally been opened to the ways of the world, and it is her immaturity and not her sexual appetite that is finally her downfall. Where Olivier's Gertrude, then, was not presented as a subject but rather as a useful cipher for the explication of Hamlet's character, Gertrude's apparent lack of autonomous subjectivity in Zeffirelli's film serves to explain her extreme and definitive sexuality: in the absence of independence and political power, Gertrude deploys her sexuality as her only resource. What remains, nonetheless, is a Gertrude whose parameters are defined by the sexual responses to her of the male protagonists of the play, and by the cultural figure of the sexually aggressive woman which Glenn Close brings to the role.

The Ophelia of Zeffirelli's film has much more of a sense of presence than the ethereal white-clad Simmons who floats through the halls of Olivier's Elsinore. As Cartmell observes,

Ophelia, played by Helena Bonham-Carter, conveys the impression of a woman who thinks for herself. She manages to oppose the prescriptions of her father through her defiant looks and also interacts with Hamlet in the nunnery scene in a manner which challenges what the men expect of her.

Zeffirelli first introduces Ophelia not as the solitary figure of Olivier's film, but as part of a community of women. When Laertes seeks her out to make his farewells before leaving for France, he finds her at work in a room full of women sewing and weaving. This serves partly as a marker of Ophelia's class, but also provides a position from which to trace the unhappy spiral of her descent into madness and suicide. At the beginning of the film she is leading a happy, useful and communal life, although in this first scene her brother's mention of Hamlet's name clearly disconcerts her. Throughout the course of the film she becomes increasingly solitary, and the uneasiness she betrays in early scenes is shown to develop progressively into confusion, anxiety, and madness.

While the misogyny of Laertes's instructions to his sister at the beginning of the film is downplayed by the cut of the screenplay, Polonius is portrayed as a careful father to his son and a relentless bully to his daughter. Despite this, Ophelia is able to respond boldly to her father's rant about her relationship with Hamlet: her 'I shall obey, my lord' (1.3.136) has an undercurrent of defiance, and she turns and runs away from her hectoring father. She also responds with confidence to Hamlet in the nunnery scene, although her final lines are cut, and, in the play scene. Zeffirelli moves the 'Get thee to a nunnery' speech to the end of the play scene, separating it from the anger of 3.1, and having Hamlet speak tenderly and kindly. This, more than his erratic behaviour, serves to fluster Ophelia, and when his final farewell to her in the scene is flippant, she is left looking confused and anxious. It is the brief glimpse of the man we are led to believe she once loved which disturbs her composure and mental strength, or at least her resolve to obey her father.

Unlike the Ophelia of Olivier's film, Bonham-Carter does not go prettily mad. Her behaviour ranges from quiet weeping to wild screaming; her hair is straggly, her feet bare despite the cold and rain, and her clothing dirty and unkempt in what Harris describes as 'the traditional trope of madness' (108). Moreover her madness is clearly a sexually knowing and frustrated one. She approaches a soldier standing guard on the battlements, embracing him, playing with his clothing and pulling aggressively on his scabbard as she sings: 'Thou promised me to wed'. While Olivier, by judicious cutting, chose to interpret Ophelia's singing of folk love ballads as a signal of her broken heart, in the tradition of the Augustan and Victorian stages, Zeffirelli returns to the Elizabethan interpretation of the songs as a marker of 'erotomania' or frustrated sexual desire (Showalter, in Parker and Hartman, 81-2). Showalter argues that '[w]hereas for Hamlet madness is metaphysical, linked with culture, for Ophelia it is a product of the female body and female nature' (Parker and Hartman, 80). She goes on:

On the Elizabethan stage, the conventions of female insanity were sharply defined. Ophelia dresses in white, decks herself with 'fantastical garlands' of wild flowers, and enters, according to the stage directions of the 'Bad' Quarto, 'distracted' playing on a lute with her 'hair down singing.' Her speeches are marked by extravagant metaphors, lyrical free associations, and 'explosive sexual imagery.' She sings wistful and bawdy ballads, and ends her life by drowning.

All of these conventions carry specific messages about femininity and sexuality. Ophelia's virginal and vacant white is contrasted with Hamlet's scholar's garb, his 'suits of solemn black.' Her flowers suggest the discordant double images of female sexuality as both innocent blossoming and whorish contamination; she is the 'green girl' of pastoral, the virginal 'Rose of May' and the sexually explicit madwoman who, in giving away her wild flowers and herbs, is symbolically

deflowering herself. The 'weedy trophies' and phallic 'long purples' which she wears to her death intimate an improper and discordant sexuality that Gertrude's lovely elegy cannot quite obscure. In Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, the stage direction that a woman enters with dishevelled hair indicates that she might be either mad or the victim of a rape; the disordered hair, her offense against decorum, suggests sensuality in each case.

(Parker and Hartman, 80-1)

Shakespeare's Ophelia suggests that she has some knowledge of sexuality in her earlier reference to the 'primrose path of dalliance' (1.3.50), but Zeffirelli cuts this speech, and hence the clearly sexualised behaviour of his Ophelia is all the more unexpected and shocking, which is surely the point.

This film also strongly suggests the premeditation of her death, with the camera zooming in on her face as she sits gazing into the lake as if to show us her thoughts. But what this shot of Ophelia's face also reveals is the total absence of the strong, confident stare with which she had responded to her father's hectoring and Hamlet's eccentric and aggressive behaviour: Bonham-Carter shows us the destruction of young woman who had previously thought, spoken, and acted for herself, and who was more than just a signifier for her own sexuality, or supposed lack thereof.

Zeffirelli's film is clearly aware of the Elizabethan categories of representation which define women according to their sexuality or chastity. Harris observes, for instance, that the costumes of the two women in the feast scene in Zeffirelli's Hamlet, in which Gertrude wears red and Ophelia blue, function to '[invoke] the two traditional inscriptions available to femininity: the blue of the Madonna, the Virgin, of containment, and the red of passion, lust, carnality, the whore' (106). Zeffirelli does not offer an open challenge to the discursive practices which permit such a reductive

and oppressive construction of female subjectivity, but he does attempt to give each of the women in Hamlet a rounder interpretation than Olivier permits. Gertrude is portrayed as Eve, a woman whose sexual activity is her downfall, but the youthfulness and immaturity which also characterise her behaviour serve in some way to explain the excessive development of a voracious sexuality in a woman whose sexual power is her only resource. The character of Ophelia is similarly expanded beyond the parameters of the model of the virgin: she demonstrates her agency by physical activity and strong, defiant looks, and Zeffirelli's film critiques the oppressive power wielded over her by her father and her lover by vividly contrasting Ophelia's former bold looks with the vacant stare of her madness, and her usually decorous behaviour with the inappropriately overt sexuality in her encounter with the guard on the battlements. But of the three film-makers discussed in this chapter, it is only Kenneth Branagh who manages to allow Gertrude and Ophelia subjectivity in his portrayal of them, but also to begin to expose the discursive and institutional practices which have controlled the categories of representation of women identified by feminist criticism.

The length, scope, and unedited screenplay of Branagh's Hamlet make possible a much fuller exploration of the women characters in the play. He embellishes what we know of Gertrude and Ophelia through the use of analeptic interpolations in an obvious attempt to, in Singh's words, 'recover their voices' and 'speak for them', although at times these embellishments serve rather to speak against them. Like Zeffirelli, Branagh moves far beyond the inherently misogynist position of Olivier's film, which reads the women characters only in the service of Hamlet's character, but his production is nonetheless 'Hamlet-centric', as Harris puts it, accepting rather than

interrogating the opinions and beliefs concerning Gertrude and Ophelia espoused by Hamlet.

Played by Julie Christie, Branagh's Gertrude is considerably more than an immature woman with an unbridled sexual appetite. She is Queen in deed as well as in name, and, while she defers to her husband, she is his partner in the affairs of the state. The wedding scene at the beginning of the film very clearly establishes Claudius and Gertrude as the ideal political couple. During his opening speech explaining his marriage to his brother's widow, which is palpably diplomatic and presents a sympathetic king, the queen is kept just out of shot throughout in a clear delineation of her power in relation to his, and when she is allowed into the shot after he introduces her as his wife, it is to show her full agreement with his diplomacy. The scene in which Claudius and Gertrude welcome Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and attend to other matters of state is further evidence of the queen's competent statesmanship. She correctly identifies Hamlet's old school friends after Claudius confuses their names, and addresses them earnestly, warmly, but with authority. She walks hand in hand with her husband as they go to meet the ambassadors from Norway, exchanging a warm smile with him, and is shown organising her household as Claudius converses with Polonius. She is as business-like as her husband throughout the scene, signing papers and listening attentively to the ambassadors and to Polonius. Despite the imbalance in terms of lines of dialogue between Claudius and Gertrude, Branagh's film uses the intelligence and insight which the queen's few lines display as the basis for her portrayal as an efficient, respected, even fierce ruler: when the messenger brings word of Laertes's uprising, Gertrude shouts 'O, this is counter,

you false Danish dogs!’ (4.5.107) and shakes her fists at the insurgents outside the door.

Like Olivier, however, Branagh does not hesitate to take the ghost’s word for it that Gertrude is an adulteress. The ghost tells Hamlet how Claudius, ‘that incestuous, that adulterate beast, / With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts / ... won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen’ (1.5.42-6), and, in one of the film’s many flashbacks, Branagh’s film accompanies the ghost’s account of Claudius’s seduction of the queen with a scene in which the royal family play at curling in the long, polished corridors of Elsinore. While her husband and son are distracted, Gertrude and Claudius share an embrace which is just a little too familiar, and a fleeting close-up of a white satin corset being unlaced confirms what the ghost’s words and even Branagh’s suggestive flashback cannot prove. But, while determining that Gertrude was unfaithful to her first husband with her second, the film preserves her innocence concerning the murder of the king, and presents her finally as an intelligent, competent, and loving woman more sinned against than sinning. This is not a radical reading in textual terms, but Branagh’s *mise-en-scène* creates a more complex Gertrude than either of his most famous predecessors, and, by allowing her individual and political agency, a portrait much more sympathetic to the concerns of feminist criticism.

But it is at the moment when Gertrude reports the death of Ophelia to Laertes and Claudius that the feminist agenda concerning the queen in Branagh’s film is perhaps at its most sophisticated. The king’s response to the news represents one of the few moments when he allows his always present covert political agenda to break through

the veneer of his conciliatory and diplomatic public persona, declaring impatiently: 'How much I had to do to calm his rage! / Now fear I this will give it start again' (4.7.167-8). But when, in Branagh's film, he calls to Gertrude to accompany him as he follows Laertes, she defies him with a look and stays behind: it is his lack of sympathy for the death of an innocent and wronged girl that finally and pivotally turns the queen against her husband. This also creates another interesting link between Gertrude and Ophelia, in that it is not the words or the suffering of her son, but the plight of Ophelia that finally opens Gertrude's eyes to her own wrongdoing. In the films of Olivier and Zeffirelli no such pivotal moment occurs, and Gertrude's relationship with Claudius remains ambiguous until the flash of realisation at her death.

In his portrayal of Ophelia, Branagh seems most concerned to provide a plausible and sympathetic explanation of all that contributes to her descent into madness. His project is very similar to that of the Victorian actress Ellen Terry, who, as Showalter reports, 'led the way in acting Ophelia in feminist terms as a consistent psychological study in sexual intimidation, a girl terrified of her father, of her lover, and of life itself' (Parker and Hartman, 89). Kate Winslet's performance is careful to show the stages through which Ophelia passes, from anxiety through humiliation and terror into madness: as Harris observes, '[t]he descent into madness is clearly being constructed as a process, mitigating against the commonly held view that Ophelia is merely a cipher or flat, static figure' (122). But, as I noted above, Branagh's film also works to disrupt the categories of representation by which Ophelia is controlled in *Hamlet*. It does so by employing a series of visual metaphors – the iron gates of the chapel, the double sided mirrors of the State Hall, and the padded cell – which construct Ophelia

as ‘the object of greatest surveillance’ in the prison that is Branagh’s Denmark (Harris, 114), and which stand for the discursive and institutional practices whose oppressive power costs Ophelia her sanity.

The first of the visual metaphors which represent the discursive and institutional oppression of women is the set of iron gates at the entrance to the chapel at Elsinore. The scene in which Polonius ‘advises’ his son and his daughter takes place in the chapel, the sombre and hallowed setting lending weight and divine approval to the father’s injunctions. The gates of the chapel remain open as Polonius benevolently advises his son: ‘This above all – to thine own self be true’ (1.3.78). But Polonius pre-empts his subsequent address to his daughter on the subject of her relationship to Hamlet by closing the iron gates as though he would, with the sanction of the church, similarly lock up Ophelia’s sexuality. Although the tone with which the scene between Ophelia and her brother concerning Hamlet is played tends to override the misogyny inherent in Laertes’s advice, the visual metaphor of the closed iron gates is the most explicit filmic example of the way in which, as Traub insists, ‘male anxiety toward female erotic power [in *Hamlet*] is channelled into a strategy of containment The message of father and son is clear: the proper female sexuality is closed, contained, “locked” ’(26, 32).¹¹

If the iron chapel gates function as a visual metaphor for the patriarchal containment of female sexuality to which Ophelia is subjected, then the double-sided mirrored doors of the State Hall stand for the system of surveillance which polices that sexual containment. During the nunnery scene Polonius and Claudius conceal themselves behind one of these doors to observe Ophelia’s ‘baiting’ of Hamlet, but a noise alerts

Hamlet to the presence of his audience, and his previously tender and gentle treatment of Ophelia is transformed into demonstrably excessive violence for their benefit as he drags her physically around the room and finally pushes her roughly into the mirrored panel of one of the doors so that her face is pressed up against the glass. Just as Polonius and Claudius manipulate Ophelia in this scene for their own purposes, so Hamlet takes advantage of her position as the object of surveillance to send a clear message to those who spy on him, shoving her face against the mirror behind which Claudius is hidden to inform him that '[t]hose that are married already – all but one – shall live' (3.1.148-9).

While Branagh takes pains to suggest that Ophelia's rough treatment at the hands of her lover is a contributing factor to her madness, the speech she makes at the end of this scene, excised by both Olivier and Zeffirelli, reveals her sanity to be still intact. She acknowledges that Hamlet's denials of love in this scene contradict the many professions of it which she had reported to her father in 1.3, but Ophelia does not take Hamlet's language as an indication of a change in his affections, or of the falsehood of those earlier professions; rather, she sees the division in his language as a symptom of his madness:

I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh;
... O woe is me
T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see.

Ophelia clearly recognises in this speech that madness is manifested as a disruption of language, like music which is out of tune. Meanwhile the systems of patriarchy, containment and surveillance, are forcing an equivalent disruption in her own language.

Throughout the scene in the chapel, Branagh adds flashbacks which show Hamlet and Ophelia in bed together, and the tenderness and passion of those interpolated scenes are designed to establish the relationship as a loving and mutual one. This use of flashback functions to illustrate the way in which Polonius's advice to Ophelia to 'Tender yourself more dearly' (1.3.107) is almost the opposite of his advice to his son to be true to himself: the flashbacks are designed to persuade the audience that Hamlet's love is genuine, and yet Polonius tells Ophelia that the professions of love she believes to be true are nothing but 'springs to catch woodcocks' (1.3.115). In other words, Ophelia may not be true to herself – she may only be obedient to her father. The only words she speaks that Polonius does not contradict are the declaration of obedience: 'I shall obey, my lord' (1.3.136).

Branagh further emphasises the subordination of Ophelia's language to her father's will by having her, at Polonius's insistence, read Hamlet's love letter aloud to Claudius and Gertrude, during which a further sequence of flashbacks shows Hamlet writing and reciting the letter to Ophelia in bed. Harris notes that, as she reads the letter aloud at her father's instruction, 'her speech ... is stumbling and broken by gasps for breath – her language is disintegrating' (121). Although Hamlet's love letter is admittedly dubious as a genuine love token in its contrived use of artifice and conventional forms, the use of flashback at this point reveals the moment which

inspired it to have been one of genuine mutual affection. Belsey argues that women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were 'enjoined to silence, discouraged from any form of speech which was not an act of submission to the authority of their fathers or husbands women were denied any single place from which to speak for themselves' (1985, 149). It is the case in this scene and in the previous one in the chapel that Ophelia lacks a 'single place' from which to speak: in the chapel, she can say nothing but 'I shall obey', and when her father forces her to read a letter which he claims is evidence of madness but which she believes to be a true expression of love, the disjunctive place from which she must speak causes the breakdown of her language.

Just as she is forced to deny her belief in Hamlet's love and submit to her father's insistence that his love is false in 1.3, so Ophelia is forced to play a double part in the nunnery scene. Once again, in accordance with Belsey's observation about woman's language, obedience to her father requires Ophelia's language to misrepresent truth: she returns Hamlet's love tokens with palpable reluctance, in Branagh's version, and she guiltily lies to him when he asks where her father is, telling him Polonius, whom she knows to be concealed behind the mirrored door, is 'at home' (3.1.132). The forced division in Ophelia's language, the great rift between, as Belsey puts it, 'the "I" of the utterance and the "I" who speaks' (1985, 5), pre-empts the divided subjectivity of her madness, and the symbols of containment and surveillance which I have discussed both recur later in the film in significant relation to Ophelia's madness.

In the scene in which Polonius's body is carted to the chapel, the iron gates appear again as Ophelia throws herself against them, screaming hysterically. This marks the beginning of her madness in Branagh's film – the next time we see her she will be straitjacketed – and it is appropriate that, as she gives way to her despair, she hurls herself against one of the mechanisms which had previously stood in for the social practices denying her right to acknowledge her sexuality, to speak the truth, and to be a subject. The double-sided mirror which symbolised the patriarchal surveillance policing Ophelia's behaviour also reappears later in the film: Ophelia's padded cell is located behind one of the mirrored doors in the State Hall, and in the second of her mad scenes she leans against the glass of another mirror in a pathetic echo of her treatment at Hamlet's hands in the nunnery scene.

It is in the image of the padded cell that the previous two visual metaphors of patriarchal containment and surveillance culminate. The discursive containment of Ophelia's sexuality becomes physical, and the surveillance to which she is a party in the nunnery scene is replaced by the panoptical use of a spyhole in the roof of her cell. The reason for the increase in Ophelia's containment and surveillance is that her language is now out of control. While Horatio claims that 'Her speech is nothing' (4.5.7), he warns that 'the unshapèd use of it doth move / The hearers to collection' (8-9), and Gertrude concurs, fearing that 'she may strew / Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds' (13-14).

In her mad scenes Ophelia is presented as a divided subject, in the sense that her utterances do not conform with the subject-position (obedience, silence, sexual containment) accorded her by the ideology of the play (and the ideology of

Elizabethan society which feeds into its discourse). Belsey observes that it is language that allows the subject to participate in society, but Ophelia's language no longer permits her participation in the society of Elsinore. Whereas her language was previously forced to fall in line with her father's, she now has no father to whom to submit, and so she claims for herself a place from which to speak, the place of madness.

Branagh's film uses a particularly cruel and repressive mode of constraint and control, in this case pre-Victorian methods for the treatment of the insane, to demonstrate the urgency with which Ophelia must be silenced, because

[t]o speak is to possess meaning, to have access to language which defines, delimits and locates power. To speak is to become a subject. But for women to speak is to threaten the system of differences which gives meaning to patriarchy.

(Belsey 1985, 191)

The explicitness with which Ophelia's madness is portrayed as sexually knowing in Branagh's film represents her threat to patriarchy in that it constitutes the breakdown of the containment of her sexuality. As she sings 'Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day', Ophelia approaches Claudius until she is standing very close to him and, on the line 'By Cock, they are to blame' (4.5.60), violently thrusts her hips at him. During the final stanza, 'Quoth she "Before you tumbled me, / You promised me to wed"' (61-2), she lies on her back on the floor and mimics intercourse by pumping her hips up and down, although she weeps as she sings the final lines: "'So would I ha' done, by yonder sun, / An thou hadst not come to my bed' (63-4).¹² If her words are not sufficient proof, Ophelia's actions all but acknowledge outright that she is sexually experienced, and thus that patriarchy has failed to preserve her virginity.

As I noted above, the methods of treatment to which the mad Ophelia is subjected in Branagh's film are based largely on the pre-Victorian model, in which the use of restraints was commonplace.¹³ The padded cell, however, is a more recent innovation, and Branagh's dousing down of Ophelia with a hose is an exaggeration of the use of the cold water bath or shower as a treatment for hysteria. Branagh's portrayal of Ophelia's treatment is not historically accurate or medically specific: rather, it is a kind of nightmarish portrayal of some of the late twentieth century's worst fears about the inhumane treatment of the insane. The spyholes in the roof and the door of her cell through which Ophelia is observed similarly evoke the model of the Panopticon proposed by Jeremy Bentham as a potential design for prisons, asylums, and other institutional buildings, the principle of which was that the inmates of the Panopticon could be watched without their being able to perceive the watcher: Foucault calls it 'the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form' (205).

The cruelty of the straitjacket and the water cure, and the invasion and violation of the Panopticon, are both extreme but logical extensions of the discursive and institutional practices which aimed to delimit women's subjectivity by policies of containment and surveillance. But Ophelia denies the containment of the Panopticon, just as the language of her bawdy songs denies patriarchy's attempted containment of her sexuality: she secretes in her mouth a key which enables her to escape her cell and, in a final determined expression of agency, commit suicide. Branagh's references to the model of the Panopticon and to the institutional abuse of the insane draw attention to the categories of representation of women in the Shakespearean text and,

in conjunction with the sympathetic portrayal of both Ophelia and Gertrude, begin to disrupt those categories and the discourses which uphold them.

In the preceding analysis I have attempted to show that the close reading of Shakespearean film may provide an opportunity for the activation of the principles and techniques of feminist criticism in the classroom. The analysis of a film in terms of the cut of the screenplay, the use of particular cinematic devices and interpolations, and even of its casting allows students to explore a feminist methodology without the need for extensive theoretical work beforehand. My analysis of the films of Olivier, Zeffirelli, and Branagh has proceeded from several relatively straightforward feminist stances: that women may be and have been culturally marginalised by the forms of their fictional and dramatic representation, in a way that has little to do with the absence or presence of the female body in the representation; that the analysis of a female character need not be confined to a consideration of how 'real' she seems, and may regard her instead as the representation of certain cultural ideas about women; that women have been and continue to be represented in fiction, in drama and in film as the receptacles and the embodiments of male beliefs concerning gender roles and the nature of femininity, and have been rarely permitted to make their own meanings; and that a feminist reading of a female character may consist of giving that character a voice and an identity, but, even more importantly, must challenge the epistemological structures and systems which permit and perpetuate the marginalisation of women.

In Chapter Six, I will consider another topic which has been of interest to feminist- and gender-oriented Shakespearean scholarship, the question of gender representation and its relationship to heteronormativity. The notion of heteronormativity is integral

to Hollywood's populist appropriation of certain Shakespearean texts as paradigmatic and universal heterosexual romantic narratives, as my discussion of Michael Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream and John Madden's Shakespeare in Love will aim to demonstrate.

¹ Othello, 5.2.133

² Callaghan, Helms and Singh explain that '[i]n describing our work as materialist, we acknowledge the weight and pressure of material determinants over other dimensions of social life', while avoiding a direct association of their work with Marxist theory, which has tended to overlook the role of gender in determining the labour-capital relationship (2).

³ Such a deconstruction of binary oppositions is, to my mind, one of the crucial contributions which feminist criticism can potentially make in the secondary classroom, and, while it will not be my project here to propose methods for doing so, it remains a further example of the scope for the introduction of a feminist critical practice at secondary school level.

⁴ The phrases in square brackets indicate Olivier's modifications.

⁵ Gertrude's incestuous relationship with Claudius and Hamlet's paralysing anxiety over it are fundamental to Jones's argument in Hamlet and Oedipus (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1949).

⁶ Suffice it to say that Smith's use of the word 'tinged' is somewhat conservative!

⁷ Valerie Traub, Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁸ Harris observes that Olivier uses an iris to signify that Ophelia is seeing Hamlet in her mind's eye (121).

⁹ In his notorious edition of the play, John Dover Wilson claims that a stage direction has been lost in the transmission of Shakespeare's text which would have Hamlet enter in 2.2 '(on the inner Elizabethan stage) nine lines before his entry on the other stage at 2.2.167' (lvi), which has clear implications for the way in which Hamlet will consider Ophelia's role in the plot. Olivier follows Dover Wilson on this point.

¹⁰ Harris similarly observes that

Olivier [makes] redemption possible for both Hamlet and Gertrude: her sacrifice and his vengeance put, for a moment, the world back into Christo-centric order by his occupation of his rightful place on earth, the throne (briefly), and more lastingly, in heaven.

¹¹ Branagh later exposes the hypocrisy of the double standard concerning sexuality by showing a prostitute slipping out of Polonius's chamber in a scene shortly after the one in which he berates his daughter on the subject of her sexual conduct, and just before she herself enters to obediently report Hamlet's strange visit to her room.

¹² While it appears that Branagh has misunderstood 'an' for 'and', reading the line '*and thou hast not come to my bed*' as the lady's grief at being abandoned, Ophelia's grief as Winslet performs it is equally valid according to the terms of the ballad, in which the lover does not marry the beloved because she has already slept with him. Indeed, a careful reading of this lyric justifies Branagh's reading of Ophelia as sexually experienced.

¹³ See Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980. (London: Virago, 1985).

Chapter 6

‘A Shakespeare for the People’:

Shakespeare in Love and Michael Hoffman’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream

It’s not a film for the Shakespeare scholars. It’s a film for the people.

(Tom Wilkinson, discussing Shakespeare in Love, dir. John Madden, 1998)

‘Shakespeare’, although largely appropriated in the present century by national institutions of education and interlocking cultural institutions, is not essentially and transhistorically the blockbuster of bourgeois culture and dominant ideology. Nor, on the other hand, can popular culture be adequately understood as either ‘mass’ culture or the ‘authentic’ voice of the people.

(Derek Longhurst, in Holderness, 71)

In our culture the phenomenon called ‘Shakespeare’ operates simultaneously on a number of levels. Its ‘popular’ dimension manages at the same time to be both at odds and at home with the more arcane perceptions of an academic world in which the works also have a striking centrality.

(Terence Hawkes 1996, 1)

In the final chapters of this thesis I want to turn my attention to the concerns and the methodology of cultural studies. It had been one of the proposals of the Dartmouth Conference of 1966 that cultural theory be granted a more substantial role in the study and teaching of English, and I described in Chapter One the ways in which educational and curricular reform in New Zealand between the late 1960s and the

publication of English in the New Zealand Curriculum in 1994 saw a move further and further away from the proposals and goals of Dartmouth, particularly in terms of the development of the curriculum's position on the status and definition of literature. Despite its many reactionary characteristics, which are exacerbated by certain aspects of the modes of examination for English, English in the New Zealand Curriculum nevertheless contains important features which derive from the cultural studies paradigm. Not the least of these is the emphasis on visual language and the study of filmic and televisual texts, the increased prominence of which in English courses is largely a result of the opposition to the Leavisite canon mounted by cultural studies, and its accompanying call for the inclusion of non-canonical and visual texts within the field of study. English in the New Zealand Curriculum also introduces an awareness of the notion of 'cultural context' into the study of texts, especially literary texts, which is another broad emphasis of cultural studies, but the continued focus in the University Entrance and Bursaries examination on the more traditional features of theme, character, structure and imagery has meant that this is often overlooked in practice.

So what is cultural studies and what does it mean to pursue a cultural studies programme in the English classroom? I will begin to answer those questions with a very brief account of the history, development and various permutations of cultural studies, in order to point to significant aspects which will be useful to secondary school Shakespeare programmes. In particular, I will take up two of the principal concerns of cultural studies. In this chapter I will explore the complex interrelated notions of high and popular culture and their relationship to Shakespeare, considering in particular the ways in which two recent mainstream Shakespeare films,

Shakespeare in Love (1998) and Michael Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream (1999), negotiate the complicated relationship between Shakespeare, the academy, and popular culture described by Longhurst and Hawkes in the headnotes to this chapter. In Chapter Seven, I will discuss Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet (1996), taking up the question of cultural populism, or the ways in which popular cultural texts creatively appropriate various elements of culture and subculture. In particular I will analyse the film's visual construction to reveal both the terms of its appropriation of the Shakespearean text, and its activation, in the service of a youth culture agenda, of the visual codes associated with certain popular cultural texts, usually Hollywood films, and with youth subcultures. But first, I will proceed with an introduction to cultural studies.

Simon During describes cultural studies as 'the study of culture, or, more particularly, the study of *contemporary* culture' (1). Moreover, he notes, cultural studies 'is not an academic discipline quite like others. It possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields for investigation' (1). Yet as During concedes, 'this does not take us very far' (1). Cultural studies first emerged as a field of academic work in Great Britain during the 1950s, and it immediately differentiated itself from the anthropological and social sciences and other academic disciplines concerned with culture, including English, by its attention to the individual subject and by its insistence on the frequently denied or ignored relationship between politics and culture. The emphasis in cultural studies on what Peter Goodall describes as 'the question of the political stance of the cultural critic to the world being studied' (163) constitutes one of the main differences between that discipline and English, which, since its establishment as an academic subject at Cambridge fifty years earlier,

had also been ‘predicated on the need to study culture from a broad base and perspective’ (Goodall, 161). English and cultural studies also differed over the place of theory in the analysis of culture:

English, both in its pure Leavisite form or in the kind of pragmatic mixture of practical criticism and literary history that came to be its dominant incarnation in English departments throughout the world, is often portrayed as an undertheorised or openly anti-theoretical discipline. By contrast, Cultural Studies was, from its earliest days, marked by negotiation with a wide range of cultural and literary theories: Marxist cultural theory, the work of Althusser and Gramsci, structuralism, semiotics, theory of subcultures, communication theory, feminism, [and] Lacanian psychoanalysis.

(Goodall, 164-5)

It is because of the influence of cultural studies that not all English departments in universities around the world need continue to be branded ‘undertheorised or openly anti-theoretical’, but, as I have tried to suggest throughout the preceding chapters, the same is not always true of secondary school English classrooms, particularly in relation to the study and teaching of Shakespeare.

English and cultural studies, as Goodall recounts, have also disagreed over ‘how ... culture is composed and what its values are’ (161). Baldwin et. al. define culture in its most basic sense as the singularly human ability to create and interpret symbol: ‘Humans possess a symbolising capacity which is the basis of our cultural being’ (4). This clearly relates, although not solely, to our use of the word ‘culture’ to refer to ‘the arts and artistic activity’, which has been the predominant understanding of culture as far as the discipline of English is concerned (Baldwin et. al., 4), but for the founding practitioners of cultural studies like Raymond Williams “‘culture” was not an abbreviation of a “high culture” assumed to have constant value across time and

space' (During, 2). Rather, it denoted 'the learned, primarily symbolic features of a particular way of life' (Baldwin et. al., 4).

However, a series of changes in the economic, industrial and social structures in twentieth-century Britain meant that, as During relates,

[t]he old notion of culture as a whole way of life became increasingly difficult to sustain: attention moved from locally produced and often long-standing cultural forms ... to culture as organized from afar – both by the state through its educational system, and by what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer ... called 'the culture industry', that is, highly developed music, film and broadcasting businesses [C]ulture was thought about less as an expression of local communal lives linked to class identity and more as an apparatus within a large system of domination.

(4-5)

Thus, when we analyse culture, as Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield put it, as 'the whole system of significations by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relations with the world' (Holderness, ix), we need to be aware of the provenance of certain of those forms of signification.

What is more, it is essential to be aware of how and why value is assigned to particular forms of signification and not to others. John Frow explains that

one of the fundamental theses of work in Cultural Studies [is] that no object, no text, no cultural practice has an intrinsic or necessary meaning or value or function; and that meaning, value, and function are always the effect of specific social relations of signification.

(Mead and Campbell, 212)

The perpetuation of Shakespeare's entrenchment within Western liberal education as the embodiment of universal human nobility and the exemplar of excellent writing is an example of the function of certain of these 'specific social relations of signification', or what During, after Adorno, identifies as the 'culture industry'. One of the goals of my project has been to promote the debunking of such a belief in the 'intrinsic or necessary meaning or value' of his works in the teaching of Shakespeare in New Zealand and elsewhere.

An awareness and understanding of the nature of both tools of the 'culture industry' identified by During, institutions of education and the broadcasting establishment, is crucial to an analysis of Shakespearean film, which is usually produced in the context both of the Shakespearean text as it is deployed through the education system as a bearer of high cultural significance, and of the late twentieth-century entertainment industry in the form of the Hollywood blockbuster. While Baz Luhrmann, for example, insists that his project in making William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet is nothing more than 'communicating and revealing a story', it is naïve to assume that this story, or any other, is culturally innocent for, as Alan Sinfield argues, 'culture is an amalgam of the current stories about who we are, where we stand in relation to each other and the world, and, especially, about the power relations between us' (Holderness, 128-9). This reference to the ability of 'stories' to represent and transmit information about power relations points to the importance of Antonio Gramsci's theories of ideology and hegemony as they relate to the nature of the culture industry.

Baldwin et al. provide a concise and straightforward summary of Gramsci's account of ideology:

Ideologies can be of various sorts. Antonio Gramsci ... divided up ideologies into three categories. The first is that of common sense. Common-sense ideas are those we all take for granted. Common-sense ideas and values are part of everyday life. They form the bedrock of our understanding of the world; but when examined closely they may appear to be either contradictory or very superficial Gramsci's second category of ideology is that of a particular philosophy. This means not so much the thought of a particular philosopher but of a particular group of people in society who put forward a reasonably coherent set of ideas. These people Gramsci calls intellectuals; and he includes both traditional intellectuals such as priests, and intellectuals who emerge from social movements, like trade unionists or political activists Gramsci's third category is that of a dominant or hegemonic ... ideology, that is one that has a leading role in society.

(37)

During defines hegemony as 'a term to describe relations of domination which are not visible as such' (5). One brand of critical work associated with the broad field of cultural studies which is particularly interested in the hegemonic function of culture and the culture industry is cultural materialism, described by key practitioners Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield as 'a combination of historical and cultural context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis' (Holderness, ix). They go on to explain that '[materialism] insists that culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production. Culture is not simply a reflection of the economic and political system, but nor can it be independent of it' (Holderness, ix).

The history of the Hollywood film reveals it to be firmly entrenched in the political and economic system out of which it was produced, and it has also operated as a powerful tool by means of which the naturalisation of certain mainstream ideological

notions from all the categories delineated by Gramsci, and pertaining to key functions of human behaviour and interaction (particularly those concerning gender roles, normative sexuality, race relations, and what constitutes appropriate social conduct) has been achieved. Lee Clark Mitchell describes

the manipulative means through which a homogenized mass culture [was] imposed upon a passive public. The most popular products (Hollywood films) were constructed to appeal to the least common denominator of interest, in order not only to turn a profit but to shape popular thought.

(18)

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that one of the significant achievements of cultural studies has been the examination of commercial culture not as a hegemonic tool of the state but as a form of ‘cultural populism’. Scott Cutler Shershow observes that

Adorno’s critique of the ‘culture industry’ both influenced and joined with the writings of English and American intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s who similarly declared that mass culture was both aesthetically inferior to ‘genuine’ art and somehow less vital and authentic than what had formerly been called popular. This combined tradition is grounded in the assumption that mass culture is essentially *passive*, and that its audience is therefore *manipulated* by some other agency speaking through its transitory forms More recently ... theorists of mass culture have begun to insist on the active creativity with which the popular audience itself appropriates the cultural texts imposed on them from ‘above’ Thus, theorists of popular culture now typically distance themselves from what Andrew Ross calls the ‘well-known, conspiratorial view of “mass culture” as imposed upon a passive populace’.

(27, 38)

In other words, popular forms such as the mainstream film have come to be regarded not in the modernist sense as debased art forms, or in Marxist terms as mere vessels

for the unconscious transmission of the dominant ideology on behalf of the state, but as representations of the different forces at work in popular culture. This notion of cultural populism allows us to analyse filmic texts in terms of the way they challenge and defy the hegemony of the state, or simply according to the framework of contemporary popular culture.

Shershow calls mass culture 'a fertile field of popular appropriation' (38), while During acknowledges the emergence of a critical tradition in cultural studies which argues that popular cultural texts provide 'opportunities for all kinds of individual and collective creativity' (30). Evidence of this popular appropriation and 'individual and collective creativity' may be discovered in the analysis of youth subcultures, a line of enquiry which I shall take up in my discussion of Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet in Chapter Seven. But first, I will explore in greater detail the theories of mass, popular, and élite culture with which cultural studies has been concerned over recent decades.

In a discussion of the relationship between high culture and popular culture, Peter Goodall remarks that '[i]n recent times, "culture" has become one of the most common words in all kinds of public discourse, constantly on the lips of journalists and politicians, not to speak of academics from almost all disciplines of the Humanities' (xii). It is certainly true that the word 'culture' has in recent decades enjoyed a particular prominence in the academic discourse surrounding the works of Shakespeare, especially in the debate concerning their status in relation to popular culture. This debate has been fuelled by the high profile accorded to Shakespeare in the realm of popular culture by the mainstream box office success of a series of

Shakespearean films, reaching a culmination of sorts in 1999 when Shakespeare in Love won the Academy Award for Best Picture.¹ The popular success of Shakespearean film in the last decade has, in turn, been largely the result of a renewed and reinvigorated desire on the part of theatrical practitioners and mainstream filmmakers to reappropriate Shakespeare from the academy and to reposition the plays within the context of popular culture.

It is my contention that if we are, as Graham Holderness proposes, to ‘pos[e] fundamental cultural questions, liberat[e] radical possibilities of meaning and contribut[e] to the much needed politicisation of the “Shakespeare” institution’ within the realm of education (Shaughnessy, 81), it is crucial to explore the space occupied by the works of Shakespeare, and also by what Hawkes calls ‘the creature familiar to us as “Shakespeare”’ (1992, 144), in relation both to élite and popular culture, particularly when we acknowledge the function assigned to Shakespeare within the education system as both a marker and a perpetuator of the values of high culture. As David Margolies writes, ‘the Shakespeare [students] receive in school ... is already defined and packaged by the culture: serious, good for them, studiable, with heavy ideas meant for analysis, in a language that must be read through footnotes’ (Holderness, 52). But in order to understand the implications of Shakespeare’s institutionally consolidated centrality to Western liberal education, it is important first to trace the history and development of those categories in whose service the works of Shakespeare have been enlisted.

In his discussion of the use of the word ‘culture’ in public discourse, Goodall goes on to observe that ‘it has become an increasingly empty term. The more frequently it

is used, the more regularly it seems to need another word to prop it up and define its field of reference' (xii). While it would be inappropriate to refer to the use of the word 'culture' in recent bodies of Shakespearean scholarship as 'empty', cultural criticism covers a wide territory, as the account of cultural studies given at the beginning of this chapter suggests. It is important, then, to use the term 'culture' with care, in order to avoid the looseness and lack of specificity that Goodall decries. What is more, the increased currency of the terms 'high culture' and 'popular culture' in the public discourse to which Goodall refers has led to a certain over-simplification in the understanding of what those terms designate, so that high culture, or Culture with a capital C, 'seems to happen only at the Sydney Opera House' (Goodall, xii-xiii), while popular culture is what you watched on television last night. I suspect that these (deliberately reductive) definitions represent fairly closely the understanding of high culture and popular culture of the majority of secondary school students, and moreover that the bulk of those students would not hesitate to align the works of Shakespeare with the former category.

The notion of 'Culture with a capital C' as an account of high culture is an appropriate place to begin my discussion. Goodall observes that 'it was not really until the 1920s and 1930s – the period of modernism in the English-speaking world – that "culture" became another word for "high art"' (xiv). Theories of high art place an emphasis on aesthetic considerations, or the beauty of the object, but also on its complexity and its ability to generate meaning, especially, as Goodall notes, 'its capacity to mean something important and relevant even to a culture very different from the one in which it was [produced] The power of the classic to generate meaning is indefinite' (44). Immanuel Kant's insistence on the originality and genius

characterising the nature of the artist is another factor noted by Goodall in the delineation of what constitutes high art (so that, for example, it may not be mass produced), as is the notion of the ‘artfulness’ of the object, or its ability to draw attention to and foreground the devices and mechanisms by which it functions to generate meaning. Such a definition of high culture represents almost verbatim the primary justification for Shakespeare’s prescribed centrality in educational institutions throughout the Western world, as David Longhurst observes:

It is, surely, undeniable that the dominant figuration of Shakespeare within the institutions committed to the reproduction of the values of ‘high’ culture is articulated around his texts as embodiments of literary genius constituted in a coalescence of the ‘flowering’ of the English language and the (consequent?) ‘universal’ truths of human experience.

(Holderness, 60-1)

The plays of Shakespeare have been enshrined in Western culture, largely through their deployment in education as inspired works of genius which have value for their skilled and progressive use of a developing language, early modern English, and the way that language draws attention to itself by its profoundly metaphorical nature, as well as for their ability to communicate meaning to people across temporal, geographical, and cultural boundaries by virtue of the supposed inherent universality of their thematic emphases.

Besides commandeering the term ‘culture’ to designate high art, where previously it had been used by commentators to refer to something closer to the idea of a ‘way of life’, it was also the modernists who insisted on the adversarial nature of the relationship of high art to popular culture. John Frow refers to ‘the modernist fantasy

of self-definition through opposition to a degraded mass culture' (Mead and Campbell, 210), while Goodall observes that

one of the strongest themes in all modernist writing on culture is the conflict between ... mass civilisation and minority culture. Over and over again, it is asserted that the maintenance of culture is the responsibility of the very few.

(25)

Moreover high modernism, Andrew Milner observes, 'typically ascribed a "redemptive" function to high art, which would at the very least "save" itself, and possibly even humanity, from the philistinism of mass society' (1996, 56). High art came to be valued, then, not only for its own sake, but for its perceived ability to resist the onslaught of the culture of mass civilisation.²

If modernism defined high art largely through its opposition to so-called 'mass culture', then it is necessary that we also understand what is meant by this term, given that it is not precisely synonymous with current usages of the term 'popular culture'. Dominic Strinati provides this general definition of the differences between popular or folk culture, and mass culture, and their differentiation from high art:

The pre-mass society is viewed as a communal organic whole in which people accept and abide by a shared and agreed upon set of values which effectively regulate their integration into the community, and which recognise hierarchy and difference. There is a place for art, the culture of elites, and a place for a genuinely popular folk culture which arises from the grass roots, is self-created and autonomous and directly reflects the lives and experiences of the people. This authentically popular folk culture can never aspire to be art, but its distinctiveness is accepted and respected. Community and morality break down, individuals become isolated, alienated and anomic, the only relationships open to them being those of a financial and contractual kind. They are absorbed into

an increasingly anonymous mass, manipulated by the only source of a surrogate community and morality available to them, the mass media. In this world, mass culture spreads like a deadly ether suffocating folk culture and threatening to stifle the very integrity of art.

(9-10)

Strinati does not explain why folk culture 'can never aspire to be art' – perhaps because art is itself 'the culture of elites', as Strinati defines it – but we may infer that it is because it lacks 'the "aura" of authentic and genuine works of art' which is central to the modernist definition of high culture (Strinati, 4).

Thus we may understand folk culture as the cultural forms produced by the people themselves, whereas mass culture, which was seen to have replaced the authentic, although inferior, culture of the pre-industrial community of the working classes, is the result of the breakdown of the organic, village-based community by the process of urbanisation that industrialisation necessitated, and it is produced by institutions, particularly the mass media, which are not representative of the people and which exist within the market: this is what Adorno calls 'the culture industry'. The modernist scheme of things held that 'the people as a mass are unable to appreciate high culture with its high aesthetic standards and rigorous intellectual requirements' (Goodall, 31), and with the emergence of a mass society, culture came to be regarded as being 'open to debasement and trivialisation because the masses lack taste and discrimination' (Strinati, 8). Lee Clark Mitchell argues that '[e]ver since the 1930s, when F. R. and Q. D. Leavis polarized a distinction between art as creative moral enrichment and mass culture as escapist consumption, critics have disdained popular culture as a debased version of folk culture in an industrial age' (18), while Strinati summarises the threat to high culture posed by the culture of mass society in that 'what characterises the conception of mass culture is that it represents a debased, trivialised, artificial and

standardised culture, and challenges the intellectual arbitration of cultural taste' (21). It was from this degraded culture that modernists believed that high art would redeem society.

One of the characteristics of the account of the differences between high and popular culture briefly outlined above is the presence of a class distinction. John Guillory's account of institutionally disseminated cultural capital moves beyond questions of social class, and Frow similarly argues that the notions of high and popular culture can no longer be associated with their corresponding class's interests, proposing instead the notion of 'regimes of value'. As he explains,

[r]egimes of value are ... relatively autonomous of and have no directly expressive relation to social groups. In the case of 'high' cultural regimes, this relative autonomy is an effect of historical survivals and of the relative autonomy of the modern educational apparatus, both of which then give rise to interpretive and evaluative traditions which do not directly reflect class interests; in the case of 'popular' regimes, their relative autonomy has less to do with the historical persistence of codes of value (although this is still a factor) than with the way the mass media work to form audiences that cross the borders of classes, ethnic groups, genders, and indeed nations The concept of regime[s] of value makes it possible ... to understand the practices of both high and popular culture as being connected not in any direct way to the ruling class or the working class or to something called 'the people', but rather to particular cultural institutions, primarily the education system and the mass media High culture ... is now the culture not of the dominant class but of an institutionally located intelligentsia.

(Mead and Campbell, 211-12, 216-17)

Frow's final point is the salient one for the purposes of this discussion. Guillory's insistence that '[l]iterary works must be seen ... as the vector of ideological notions which do not inhere in the works themselves but in the context of their institutional

presentation, or more simply, in the way in which they are taught' (ix) is fundamental to the way in which Shakespeare is perceived within the realm of contemporary popular culture.

It is by means of the establishment of a literary canon, enshrined within the English curricula of schools and universities and perpetuated by the study of English itself, that the values of high art have been preserved: Milner asserts that 'literature has been the study not of writing *per se* but of valued writing What eventually came to distinguish "reading English" at university from reading books on the train ... was the ability to "discriminate", to "evaluate", to "criticize"' (1996, 6-7).³ The modernist ideal of 'cultural taste' was fundamental to the selection of the literary canon which, as Milner puts it,

has normally been seen as 'authentic' and 'inspired' in ways that other (merely 'fictional') texts are not. Such distinctions between more or less authentic and more or less inspired texts are, of course, judgements of value rather than statements of fact. But in so far as literary studies understands itself as the study of great literature, then such value-judgements enter into the very definition of its subject matter, and thereby take on the quasi-objectivity of what we might well term a pseudo-fact.

(1996, 5)

Milner's account of canon formation, and of the study of English literature itself, signals that the criteria by which the categories of high culture and popular culture are defined, because they institutionally produced and perpetuated, and thus contestable, are apparently unstable. What is more helpful for the purposes of my discussion is the notion of cultural capital, for, as Guillory insists, 'canon formation is best understood as a problem in the constitution and distribution of cultural capital', and 'the category of "literature" names the cultural capital of the old bourgeoisie' (ix-x). What Guillory

defines as symbolic capital, or ‘ a kind of knowledge-capital whose possession can be displayed upon request and which thereby entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person’ (ix),⁴ is particularly pertinent to the ways in which films like Shakespeare in Love and Hoffman’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream refer to and utilise high art, since it has more to do with the value that a society assigns to a text because of its symbolising currency than with the inherent attributes of the text itself.

My intention in this chapter is to suggest a method of exploring the notions of high and popular culture and their complicated interrelationship with the works of Shakespeare by means of an examination of two recent Shakespearean films, the Oscar-winning Shakespeare in Love, directed by John Madden, and Michael Hoffman’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, both of which betray a particular preoccupation with Shakespeare’s significance in Western society as a cultural signifier, and as a signifier of Culture. Frow argues that

an intellectual elite is engaged in a battle over values. And the Shakespearean text continues to be one of the sites on which that battle is fought – not because of something inherently special about the texts, but only and precisely because they have been constituted as a site of struggle by being invested with immense symbolic importance.

(Mead and Campbell, 217)

I intend to expand on Frow’s argument by proposing that the production of Shakespearean films for mainstream popular audiences represents another side of that ‘battle over values’.

As Goodall observes, '[i]f one examines notions of what art is and is not, even within the relatively short time of the last couple of centuries, one cannot but be struck by the instability of the categories' (47), and indeed, the above account of theories of high art, mass culture, cultural capital, and the institutional establishment of the literary canon as the preserve of high culture has barely served to provide working definitions of high and popular culture. To clarify, then, my argument here fundamentally understands popular culture to be in opposition to, or at least outside, the intellectual *élite* as the self-appointed guardians and distributors of high culture, and my interest in high culture will be primarily to do with the symbolic capital which accrues to its texts and forms, and with the redemptive capabilities which modernism has awarded those texts.

In this discussion of Shakespeare in Love and Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream and their negotiation of the peculiar space occupied by a mainstream Shakespearean film I will consider two broad questions. The first is the way in which both films negotiate the popular by emphasising and enhancing the similarities between Shakespeare's plays and the predominant Hollywood paradigm, the romantic love narrative. Second, I will compare the particular cultural branding exercise of Hoffman's Dream, which takes pains to locate the Shakespearean text in the context of a range of recognisably high cultural forms, with the apparently postmodern enterprise of Shakespeare in Love, in which the metaphor of the Hollywood production system rubs shoulders happily with a series of running Elizabethan in-jokes and obscure references to the works of Shakespeare and Webster. I will conclude by assessing whether either of these films is ultimately able to dispense with the categories of high and popular culture which are variously applied to Shakespeare,

to opera, to painting, to theatre, to mainstream cinema, to television, and so on, and by considering what kind of value, according to Frow's regime, these films claim for the Shakespearean text.

During the final moments of Michael Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream, as the members of Theseus's court are falling about laughing at a brilliantly comic rendering of Pyramus's death scene by Bottom the weaver, Flute, as Thisbe, quietly drops his ridiculously exaggerated falsetto, takes off his large and cumbersome wig, and delivers a valedictory speech worthy of Juliet. Silence descends upon the auditorium, more than one tear is surreptitiously brushed away, and, after an emotionally charged pause, the silence erupts into thunderous applause. The tone of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', whose performance has earned such derision from Theseus and his fellow wits, Lysander and Demetrius, is transformed from comedy to pathos: very tragical mirth becomes very tragical tragedy.

The emotive rendering of the Pyramus and Thisbe story as a true tale of genuine love and tragic loss along the lines of Romeo and Juliet is symptomatic of the film's extended treatment of the theme of love. Hoffman perceives the central problem of the play to be the achievement of unity among the play's disparate elements: 'What common motivation', Hoffman asks, 'could one hope to find among characters as different as Titania, Queen of the Fairies, and Snout the Tinker?' (vii). Without stretching his imagination too far, the common motivation that Hoffman finds for them is love: 'Everyone in the play wants to be loved,' he claims, 'but love's attainment for each of them has obstacles imposed from within or without' (vii). This reductive premise is the basis of the transformation of the Shakespearean narrative into

a Hollywood film, which is Hoffman's cultural project. Calista Flockhart, the actress who plays Helena, is quoted thus in the published screenplay of the film: 'As long as people are being born and having children, and falling in love and getting married, and dying, then Shakespeare is relevant' (Hoffman, 45, *n.*). This kind of belief in the universal and eternal relevance of the Shakespearean text, a function of the configuration of Shakespeare's plays within the educational institution, leads filmmakers like Hoffman to seek parallels between Shakespeare's stories and those with which the mainstream Hollywood film is usually concerned, and then to play up those similarities. Hoffman asserts that A Midsummer Night's Dream 'is a play that, like a magic mirror, enchants us and reflects back to us who we are, and what we know of love' (Hoffman, ix), and in his film Shakespeare's extended warning against the dangers of dotage and the pitfalls of romantic love becomes a quintessentially Hollywoodian playing out of the quest for true love. As a member of the Hollywood film industry puts it, '[w]hen you sugar-coat the Shakespeare it makes it an easier pill for mainstream audiences to swallow'.⁵

The casting of Calista Flockhart is exemplary of Hoffman's cultural project, and the notion of the quest for true love which is so current in the popular cultural forms of film and television is concentrated in the person of the actress.⁶ Flockhart's Helena cannot help but remind the audience of Ally McBeal, the eponymous heroine of an American television series which follows the fortunes of a young lawyer whose hapless love-life centres around a desperate belief that there is 'someone for everyone', and whose legal career consists of a long line of cases argued, and usually won, on the grounds that the defendant was under the influence of true love when the crime in question was perpetrated. Flockhart imports the concerns of her small-screen

character into the Shakespearean text, over-writing Shakespeare's exploration of the nature of romantic love with Ally McBeal's fruitless and usually undignified search for her soulmate: as the film's sales line reads, 'Love makes fools of us all'.

Linda Charnes calls this phenomenon 'the cultural logic of commodity casting', the casting of 'celebrities who already exist in the culture as signifying products, beyond the formal boundaries of their respective "texts"' (1997, 7). It is at this point that the notions informing Hoffman's cultural project start to become apparent: one of Flockhart's fellow cast members is Rupert Everett, an openly gay actor, film-maker, and activist. While his two most recent mainstream Hollywood films, the homophonically entitled My Best Friend's Wedding and The Next Best Thing, feature Everett as a gay character, Hoffman's film does not permit any incorporation of Everett's extra-textual celebrity: there is barely a hint of the homoerotic in his Oberon, or in the presentation of the relationship between Oberon and Puck. Everett's resolutely heterosexual performance in Hoffman's film seems aimed to suppress the function of commodity casting, while Flockhart's Helena freely and frequently references the conventionally heterosexual Ally McBeal. Hoffman's film insists that romantic love and sexual attraction, at least in a Shakespearean context, belong firmly in the realm of the heterosexual.⁷

This tendency to simplify and redefine the play's concerns in terms of the Hollywood definition of love may also be discerned in the film's depiction of the idyllic romance between Theseus and Hippolyta: there is no wooing with swords going on here, and, as Jim Welsh observes, 'Hippolyta is ... translated into a genteel, aristocratic lady, rather too frail to be imagined wearing Amazonian battle-garb' (Welsh, 160). What

Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard term 'the submission of an entire community of self-governing women' (Paster and Howard, 192) becomes, in Hoffman's film, a marriage of true minds. In a similarly reductive fashion, the charming reconciliation of Oberon and Titania completely sidesteps the thorny questions of the changeling boy, disregarding Oberon's petulant demand that Titania render the boy up to him, and Titania's neglect of the child during her infatuation with the ass which allows Oberon to claim the boy at last. A final fleeting shot near the end of the film shows the three of them grouped together in an idyllic family picture.

But it is in its portrayal of the love story of Bottom and the Queen of the Fairies that the film most readily resorts to the Hollywood formula. Bottom the weaver is reimagined in this film as a hopeless dreamer who spends his spare time dressing up in an immaculate white linen suit and straw boater, and going out to drink coffee at the local café. However, as Hoffman claims, '[i]t is only when we learn that it is the only suit he owns, that he has a lousy marriage, that he lives in a dingy flat, that we know he clings to delusions of grandeur because he has no love in his life' (viii). Titania is similarly interpreted as, in Hoffman's words, 'a woman who want[s] to love simply, unconditionally, in a way the politics of her relationship with Oberon made impossible' (ix). The reinterpretation of these characters leads Hoffman to play the Titania-Bottom relationship not for the conventional laughs but, as with Pyramus and Thisbe, to appeal to the audience's latent romantic inclinations, and we are encouraged to believe that a couple of nasty pranks played by Oberon and Robin Goodfellow have turned into a love story remarkable for its beauty and its simplicity.

In his death scene at the end of 'The tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe' in Hoffman's film, Bottom contrives to play his suicide twice over. He is so pleased with his success in pretend-stabbing himself under his arm to 'Thus die I: thus, thus, thus', that he resurrects himself for 'Now am I dead, / Now am I fled', and stabs himself even more spectacularly through the breast-plate on his second attempt: Quince's startled glance as he looks up from the prompt-book makes it clear that Bottom is improvising his dying monologue. In trying to make a film for the consumer of the multiplex and the inhabitant of the ivory tower alike, Hoffman, I contend, takes the same kind of liberties with A Midsummer Night's Dream as Bottom takes with 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. By drawing attention to and emphasising certain aspects of the narrative, in this case the suicide of Pyramus, Bottom transforms the tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisbe into the glorious and most excellent death of the worthy Pyramus the lover-tyrant. In the same way, the sentimental romanticisation of certain relationships in the play, particularly the Theseus-Hippolyta and Titania-Bottom relationships, and the exaggerated emphasis on the theme of romantic love à la Ally McBeal, function to turn Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, in Hoffman's hands, into 'Three Weddings and a Play'.

Transforming A Midsummer Night's Dream into the love story of Titania and Bottom (and of Theseus and Hippolyta, and Hermia and Lysander, and Helena and Demetrius, and Oberon and Titania, and Pyramus and Thisbe) involves a similar kind of licence to that taken by the makers of Shakespeare in Love, who re-imagine 'the author of the plays of William Shakespeare' as 'the poet of true love', and transform Romeo and Juliet into the love story of William Shakespeare and a fictional noblewoman by the name of Viola de Lesseps: as Charnes puts it, 'Shakespeare the

playwright is superseded by Shakespeare the paradigm' (1993, 155), and in this case, Shakespeare represents the paradigmatic heterosexual romantic narrative. Indeed, the audience's response at the end of Hoffman's 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is strikingly reminiscent of that of the audience at the end of the performance of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare in Love. Both films imply that what audiences really want to see are stories of true love and earth-moving passion, with some laughs: 'Comedy: love, and a bit with a dog. That's what they want', as Henslowe tells Shakespeare at the beginning of Shakespeare in Love.

The first headnote to this chapter indicates that Shakespeare in Love was conceived, produced, and marketed as 'a film for "the people"', as Tom Wilkinson, the actor who plays Hugh Fennyman, insists. John Madden, the director, elaborates, explaining that their intention was to make a film that didn't 'feel academic or dry or any of those things'. When Baz Luhrmann's film of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet was released in 1996, the director made similar declarations about his project to give Shakespeare back to the people, to whom, of course, he belonged to start with. In an episode of The Southbank Show entitled 'William Shakespeare' made in 2000, Luhrmann made a point of decrying what he calls 'Club Shakespeare', or, in other words, the academy. Shakespeare in Love, like Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, is an exemplum of the nature of the film industry's concerted attempt to wrest Shakespeare back from the academy in the name of 'the people'.

It is no accident that making a Shakespeare film for 'the people' involves making a film about Shakespeare *in love*. This film aligns neatly with Catherine Belsey's

account of 'history as costume drama, the reconstruction of the past as the present in fancy dress':

The project is to explain away the surface strangeness of another century in order to release its profound continuity with the present. The past is read as – and for – evidence that change is always only superficial, that human nature, what it is to be a person, a man or a woman, a wife or a husband, is palpably unchanging.

(1985, 2)

One of the signals of this 'profound continuity' of the past with the present is the popularity of the romantic love ideology, which, in spite of its relatively recent provenance, is often assumed to have dominated the entire historical sweep of Western literatures.⁸ The still powerful cultural preoccupation with this kind of narrative both accounts for, and is partly itself a product of, the endurance of Romeo and Juliet, which itself constitutes, as Dymphna Callaghan describes, 'one of the preeminent cultural documents of love in the West' (Callaghan et. al., 59).

It follows that when Baz Luhrmann decided to make a film to redemocratise Shakespeare, he chose Romeo and Juliet, and when Miramax Films agreed to make a film about the historical figure of William Shakespeare, it was important that that film concerned itself with, as John Madden puts it, 'how [Shakespeare] came to write Romeo and Juliet': Shakespeare in Love is based on the premise that 'this man who wrote so many extraordinary things and had so many amazing insights must have had something that happened in his life that enabled him to do that'. This is a highly conservative model of the act of literary authorship, to say the least, and it conveniently overlooks the fact that Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet derives from a series of predecessor texts which deal with a pair of doomed lovers. Nevertheless, the

fulcrum on which the popularising project of Shakespeare in Love turns is the Romeo and Juliet narrative: you make a film about Shakespeare for ‘the people’ by telling the story of Shakespeare in love, and you tell the story of Shakespeare in love by expounding a theory as to how he came to write the great romantic narrative of Western culture, Romeo and Juliet.

‘According to ... countless Shakespeareans,’ writes Dymphna Callaghan, ‘[Romeo and Juliet] constitutes a universal legend of love representing elemental psychic forces of desire and frustration purportedly characteristic of the human condition in every age and culture’ (Callaghan et. al., 61). Harris similarly notes that ‘[r]omantic love ... is in our time so naturalised that Romeo and Juliet has become the validating myth of heterosexual desire in Western culture’ (185). Shakespeare in Love certainly reiterates this position: a wager is contested between Shakespeare and Viola’s fiancé, Lord Wessex, over the question of whether or not, as the Queen puts it, ‘a play [can] show us the very truth and nature of love’, and, not surprisingly, Shakespeare wins the wager by writing Romeo and Juliet.

What is significant is that Shakespeare in Love creates Shakespeare as the poet of true love and valorises Romeo and Juliet as the illustration of the very truth and nature of love by positing a particular definition of what it is that constitutes true love. Both the protagonists of Shakespeare in Love are searching for this elusive quantity: Will complains of ‘the emptiness that seeks a soulmate’, and believes in the existence of ‘love that overthrows empires, love that binds two hearts together come hellfire and brimstone’. He declares that his muse is ‘always Aphrodite’, although the allusion to the goddess and icon of romantic love is lost on his interlocutor, the soulless

Henslowe, who thinks Will is referring to ‘Aphrodite Baggett who does it behind the Dog and Trumpet’. This exchange neatly establishes that Will is looking for more than just sex, as it were.

Meanwhile Viola, after seeing a performance of The Two Gentlemen of Verona at court, dreamily tells her nurse that ‘I will have poetry in my life, and adventure, and love ... love above all’. ‘Like Valentine and Sylvia?’, asks the nurse, to which Viola protests: ‘No, not the artful postures of love, but love that overthrows life, unbiddable, ungovernable, like a riot in the heart and nothing to be done come ruin or rapture. Love as there has never been in a play’. Will, then, wants something more than purely physical satisfaction, while Viola wants something more than courtly love: they find the love they have been seeking in each other, although, as it manifests both as physical passion and courtly professions (as in the proto-balcony scene), it is unclear just how the exacting standards of the romantic protagonists have been met.

The life-altering love and earth-shattering passion of Will and Viola’s relationship are played out in Shakespeare in Love against the backdrop of two models of Elizabethan marriage as dry, loveless arrangements. Viola’s marriage has been arranged for her by her father, and she is ‘sold in marriage’, as Will puts it, to Lord Wessex. Upon giving her the news of their impending marriage Wessex tells her: ‘You are allowed to show your pleasure’; to which Viola responds in stupefied horror: ‘But I do not love you!’ This is too confusing for the incurably unromantic Wessex, who declares: ‘How your mind hops about! Your father was a shopkeeper, your children will bear arms and I will recover my fortune. That is the only matter under discussion today’. Will’s marriage to Anne Hathaway is similarly constructed as

anything but a romantic union: it is a passionless relationship between a young man and a woman eight years his senior who were forced into marriage when she became pregnant, and who share a 'cold bed' since the birth of their children. Shakespeare in Love offers as a corrective to marriages of convenience and coercion the love affair of Will and Viola, which comprises a marriage of true minds, a meeting of soulmates – in short, it comprises the narrative of Romeo and Juliet.

However, as Callaghan goes on to argue, this version of love and desire was only beginning to emerge at the time at which Shakespeare was writing Romeo and Juliet:

Romeo and Juliet was written at the historical moment when the ideologies and institutions of desire – romantic love and the family...– were being negotiated [T]he version of familial and personal relations ... endorsed by Romeo and Juliet is ... in our own time so fully naturalized as to seem universal.

(Callaghan et. al., 59-61).

Harris similarly observes that Romeo and Juliet presents romantic love as 'both transgressive and in the process of being legitimated' (185). Similarly, the models of Elizabethan marriage given in Shakespeare in Love do not give the full picture, for, as Catherine Belsey observes, by the early seventeenth century, '[m]arriage [was] no longer a question primarily of property, and the transmission of names, titles, entitlements; and the relation between love and marriage [was] no longer a matter of indifference' (1994, 147). Thus, when historically situated, Romeo and Juliet represents not so much the embodiment of timeless passion and universal love, but the point of transition in the epistemology of romantic love and the understanding of the nature of marriage.

The shift in the nature of the romantic narrative, and in romantic love itself, is traced within the text of Romeo and Juliet: at the beginning of the play Romeo is in love with Rosaline, who scorns his affections, being determined to live chaste. This is representative of the medieval pattern of romantic love, which, as Callaghan notes, 'was generally constructed as the unrequited passion of a male subject ... as opposed to the emergent construction of romantic love as mutual heterosexual desire leading to a consummation in marriage, a union of both body and spirit' (Callaghan et. al., 61). The second half of the equation is much closer to Romeo's relationship with Juliet, for, as he tells Friar Lawrence, 'her I love now / Doth grace for grace and love for love allow; / The other did not so' (2.3.85-7). Friar Lawrence himself neatly sums up the distinction between Romeo's first love and his second: when Romeo protests that 'Thou chidd'st me oft for loving Rosaline', Friar Lawrence replies: 'For doting, not for loving, pupil mine' (2.3.81-2).

The theory at the heart of the films of both Hoffman and Madden that the romantic love narrative is a simple point of continuity between Shakespeare's plays and Hollywood cinema is revealed to be less than accurate by the arguments of Callaghan and others, and their films are much closer to Belsey's model of 'the present in fancy dress' than to the discovery of a 'profound continuity' between Shakespeare's day and our own. The thematic universality that Western liberal education and mainstream popular culture have attributed and continue to attribute to Shakespeare's great romantic masterpiece must be acknowledged, then, not to be the result of the playwright's faultless insight into the timeless truths surrounding the nature of the unchanging human subject, but at least in part as a function of the anachronistic projection of the psychoanalytic account of adolescence and the development of

sexual identity onto the Shakespearean text. Philip Armstrong observes that Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, like Shakespeare in Love and other films of Romeo and Juliet, is 'focused on the emergence of a sexual and gender identity not only defined in peculiarly modern terms, but heavily indebted to the psychoanalytic narrative of psychic development' (182): in Belsey's words, 'the past as the present in fancy dress'.

The projection of a purportedly universal romantic narrative on to A Midsummer Night's Dream and Romeo and Juliet in order to establish a point of continuity between the Shakespearean text and the Hollywood film is one example of the efforts of Hoffman and Madden to popularise, democratise, and universalise Shakespeare. The meeting between Ally McBeal and Helena in Hoffman's Dream represents this point of intersection between the popular medium of the Hollywood film and the Shakespearean text, but negotiating this point of intersection is for both directors much more complicated than casting an American sitcom actress to play a Shakespearean heroine, because of Shakespeare's status as a high cultural signifier and the cornerstone of Western liberal education. Hoffman's film, to which I shall now return, betrays a clear if largely unconscious agenda governing what elements go to make a Shakespeare film, and as to what kind of cultural site a Shakespearean film is. Its treatment of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream intends a redefinition both of the Shakespearean text as narrative, which is modified and appropriated as a Hollywood romantic comedy, as I described above, but also of the Shakespearean text as a cultural signifier.

To illustrate this process, let me return to Hoffman's 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. In the final scene of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Theseus asks his new wife and fellow newly-weds: 'what masques, what dances shall we have / To wear away this long age of three hours / Between our after-supper and bed-time?' (5.1.32-4). There is a choice of entertainments at hand, including 'The battle of the centaurs, to be sung / By an Athenian eunuch to the harp' (5.1.44-5), 'The riot of the tipsy bacchanals / Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage' (47-8), 'The thrice-three muses mourning for the death / Of learning, late deceased in beggary' (52-3), and, of course, 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus / And his love Thisbe: very tragical mirth' (56-7). However, when Hoffman's film offers us a glimpse of the performers preparing backstage as they await Theseus's choice, we see not a eunuch with a harp, nor a pack of drunken women tearing Orpheus to pieces, nor even the nine muses. Rather, the entrants of the dramatic competition of Hoffman's film include an Aida practising her virtuoso passages, an Othello strangling his Desdemona, a Commedia dell'arte troupe, the cast of a Greek tragedy, and a collection of jugglers, clowns and fire-eaters. A new assembly of recognisable stories and genres from art and culture becomes the context from which the tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe is chosen. In broader terms, this scene depicts in microcosm the second aspect of the cultural project of Hoffman's film, which relocates the Shakespearean text in the context of a variety of other artistic and cultural discourses.

Unlike other Shakespearean film-makers such as Kenneth Branagh and Baz Luhrmann, whose films create new audiovisual worlds which aim at internal coherence and integrity, Hoffman builds an audiovisual environment for the Shakespearean text from a composite of elements drawn, apparently at random, from

disparate strands of art, culture, mythology, and technology. Closer examination of these various elements reveals a method which is neither historical nor theoretical in its operation, but rather one driven by the anxiety associated with the contested space between high and popular culture occupied by the Shakespearean film. Hoffman's film relocates Quince and company's production of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in a new cultural context by aligning it with what we now recognise as the high cultural forms of Verdi's Aida, Shakespeare's Othello, and the traditions of Greek tragedy, but also with the folk cultural traditions of the circus and the Commedia dell'arte. By placing it alongside several other readily identifiable texts from throughout the history of the performing arts, this relocation of the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' text claims for it a certain kind of cultural value which encompasses both high and popular forms. Like the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' play, Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream is relocated not only to a different time and place, but to a new cultural context, where it mixes with Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist painting and with nineteenth-century Italian opera at the same time as it mingles with Tinker Bell and with Ally McBeal. However, Hoffman's film represents something more complex and less successful than the postmodern juxtaposition of high and popular cultural texts, as his use of certain high cultural forms demonstrates.

The music of the film's soundtrack is derived from three sources. First of all, the film employs the overture and the famous Wedding March from Mendelssohn's incidental music written for a production of the play in 1843: this may also be a reference to the Warner Brothers 1935 film of the play, which uses Mendelssohn's score extensively. Secondly, a series of arias is drawn from the nineteenth-century Italian operatic canon, featuring excerpts from works as distant in chronology as

Rossini's La Cenerentola (Cinderella), written in 1817, and Puccini's La Bohème of 1896.⁹ Finally, passages of original score were composed by Simon Boswell, which, by the composer's own account, draw on material from Mozart, Stravinsky, Ravel, and the popular music of ancient cultures. Setting Boswell's contribution aside, we may consider the other two sources for the film's score in the light of their interesting relation to popular culture. Mendelssohn's Wedding March is now a universally recognised piece of music, having been played at a multitude of weddings throughout the western world during the last century or so; indeed, it has become a signifier almost entirely divorced from its context and its composer. Similarly, the operatic arias, as MacDonald Jackson observes in his article on the film published in The Shakespeare Newsletter, 'are mostly well known – sometimes through television commercials' (Jackson, 37). Recent musical trends have shown that what is produced when arias are removed from their operatic context is something along the lines of the Three Tenors phenomenon, and, interestingly, the artists featured on the film's soundtrack include such stars of the opera world who have earned commercial recording success as Luciano Pavarotti and Cecilia Bartoli. The removal of an operatic aria from its musical and narrative context in the 'opera's greatest hits' manner of The Three Tenors and Hoffman's film soundtrack begs the question as to what kind of value is thought to inhere in these fragments of musical texts. Hoffman claims that his decision to use Italian opera arose from a search to discover the popular music of late nineteenth-century Tuscany, which, an 'expert' informed him, was opera,¹⁰ but I would argue that, since most of the arias used in Hoffman's film are more or less recognisable to mainstream audiences as exemplars of the high cultural operatic form, they function in terms of their association with high culture. Opera and Shakespeare, Hoffman's film seems to suggest, form an appropriate combination.¹¹

Hoffman's use of J.W. Waterhouse's painting Hylas and the Nymphs provides a telling example of the principles at work in the film's of adoption of artistic and musical texts. Waterhouse's late Pre-Raphaelite painting is based on the legend of Hercules's companion Hylas, who was lured by a party of nymphs, attracted by the young man's beauty, to his death in a forest pool. However, little trace of the fatal sexuality of the nymphs nor any suggestion of the tragic end awaiting Hylas remain in Waterhouse's painting; as Julian Treuherz explains, 'Waterhouse has tailored Pre-Raphaelite ingredients to the middle-brow demands of the ... public' (123). Hoffman uses the Waterhouse painting as the basis for the depiction of some of Titania's fairies in his film. In the film's screenplay he notes: 'I wanted the presence of female archetypes both light and dark in Titania's world. I looked to Waterhouse for the gentle innocent sexuality' (34, *n.*). This process of interpretation and dislocation of source material has seen the murderous sexuality of the mythological nymphs transformed into the gentle and innocent sexuality of Titania's fairies.¹²

The portrayal of Titania herself, Hoffman's screenplay notes, 'is directly influenced by the works of Burne-Jones, G.F. Watts, and the Pre-Raphaelites' (27, *n.*), while '[t]he inspiration for Oberon is drawn directly from Moreau's brooding Apollo in The Muses Leaving Their Father Apollo' (Hoffman, 25, *n.*). The fairyworld cast features various fairies and dwarves, as well as the satyr-like puck, Robin Goodfellow, representing the diverse characters of Elizabethan folklore, along with nymphs, fawns, and other mythological beings drawn from Shakespeare's classical sources. However, all these elfin creatures manifest as roving spots of glowing light, in the

fashion of J.M. Barrie's (and later Disney's) Tinker Bell, in a way that functions to combine representations of fairies from mythology and from high cultural forms like French Symboliste painting or Ovid's Metamorphoses with those of the popular cultural world of pantomime and Disney.

For the film's soundtrack, for its design, and for other characteristic features such as its Italian setting and its extended use of late nineteenth-century technology,¹³ Hoffman looks not within the text for source material, nor even to the cultural and artistic texts from the period in history during which Shakespeare's play was written, but rather to texts literary, artistic, and musical, distant historically and aesthetically from each other and from the Shakespearean text. Each of these texts is dislocated from its generic and thematic context, and employed as a raw material in the construction of a new context for the Shakespearean text. This process of dislocation does not represent the postmodernist characteristic of pastiche, which Goodall defines as 'the juxtaposition of different styles without a sense of some fixed point of reference from which they are viewed' (63), because in this case, the Shakespearean text as high art functions as that point of reference.

Hoffman's use of decontextualised texts from various cultural fields signifies more than just confusion or ambivalence over the position of Shakespeare in relation to high and popular culture. His position on the status of the Shakespearean text may be clearly discerned at certain moments in the film. One of those moments is at the end of the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', in which the audience, previously derisory or at best gently mocking, is stunned into teary silence by Thisbe's dying speech. I cited this earlier as evidence of the popularity of the (tragic) romantic love

narrative, but it also functions to signal the kind of redemptive quality that Hoffman's film claims for Shakespeare, not least because Flute's performance of this scene is somewhat disjunctive with the tone of the rest of the film. The response of Theseus's court testifies to the ability of the Shakespearean text (even 'Pyramus and Thisbe'!) to reach and move an audience, despite the limitations of early modern theatrical representation: the idiosyncrasies of the Elizabethan theatre are a theme of and a source of comedy throughout Shakespeare in Love, and the preparations of Quince and co. in Hoffman's Dream testify to the need for props and artifice to support the 'realism' of the dramatic enterprise.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the audience is stunned into silence by the 'genuine' emotional power of the performance: they are truly moved by the pathos of the deaths of the lovers, and register, by thunderous applause and loud cheers, their approval and endorsement of the power of the drama to convey 'real' emotion beyond the representational capabilities of costumes and props.

What is more, this redemptive capability is shown to transcend the boundaries and definitions of high, popular, mass, and folk culture. The performers of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' are, of course, artisans, while the audience which is so moved by their performance is made up of aristocrats. But Hoffman also proposes a kind of exchange among the different cultural registers in which Shakespeare may participate. During the opening scenes of the film, which detail the feverish preparations being made for the wedding feast of Theseus and Hippolyta, a small band of dwarves is discernible in the background, surreptitiously but industriously filling up a wooden cart with various household items which will later be redistributed at the court of Titania. Among these items are a gramophone and a set of records, which are soon put to good use as a decorative centrepiece and a set of serving platters by Titania's fairies. It is Bottom

the ass who reveals to the fairy court the true use of these objects, and the fairies' response to the music which is produced is very much like that of the audience at the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. The power of 'Casta Diva' to move, to enchant, to transcend the distinction between upper and working class, or, in this case, human and magical being, is the same kind of power that Hoffman's film claims for Shakespeare. The fairies' ignorance of the proper function of a gramophone stands in for a lack of a cultural capital, but this does not diminish the affective power of the music, and nor should a lack of academic knowledge about Shakespeare diminish the affective power of his works for an audience similarly lacking in cultural capital.

The medium through which the art form is transmitted is also significant: like the bicycle with which Puck is so fascinated, the technological capability of the gramophone possesses a kind of magic in the eyes of creatures who themselves have supernatural powers. By investing technology with an aura of magic, Hoffman claims for the medium of film a similar kind of magical potential which makes it an appropriate vehicle, despite its mass cultural associations, for the transmission of the transcendently redemptive Shakespearean text.

Hoffman's cultural project is ultimately unsuccessful because it resorts to the modernist paradigm of the power of art to redeem the masses. It is not sufficient to claim, for instance, that opera was originally the music of working class people, or, in other words, a form of folk culture, because it fails to take into account the project of modernism and the establishment of divisions between high, folk, and mass culture, and it denies the subsequent impact of the mass media in similarly according signifying power to various texts and cultural forms. The kinds of cultural exchange

that Hoffman demonstrates between the human and fairy worlds and between the working and upper classes do not translate into a simple exchange between the high cultural site of the Shakespearean text and the popular site of the Hollywood film. Hoffman attempts the dissolution, or at least the happy co-existence, of the categories of élite, popular, folk, and mass culture, but this is doomed by his failure to recognise the different kinds of symbolic value which modernism and the mass media have assigned to opera, to the Disney film, to Pre-Raphaelite painting, to television comedies like Ally McBeal, and, most importantly, to Shakespeare.

Like Hoffman, the makers of Shakespeare in Love acknowledge that negotiating Shakespeare's relationship to high and popular culture is more complicated than simply inventing a seamless continuity between Shakespeare's apparent interest in narratives of romantic love and Hollywood's preoccupation with the same. One of the ways in which Shakespeare in Love attempts to resolve the adversarial relationship between high culture and popular culture established by modernism is by the triumphant Hollywoodisation of the Shakespearean world, which it achieves by means of the insertion of a series of paradigmatic references to the Hollywood industry into the context of a beautifully recreated Elizabethan theatre, complete with local Bankside colour. But, at the same time as Shakespeare in Love recreates the Shakespearean theatre as a little Hollywood, it also stresses the historical peculiarities of that theatre and the academic discourses which surround it, particularly by its evocation of the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*. The shift from Hoffman's film to Madden's, then, is the move from decontextualised texts to decontextualised contexts, the first of which I shall discuss being the context of the Elizabethan theatre.

The opening sequence of Shakespeare in Love, which I also discuss in Chapter Two, begins with a single extended shot in which the camera pans around and down the wooden O of the Rose Theatre, showcasing the interior of this meticulously reconstructed replica in extensive detail. We are shown the thatched roof of the theatre, the galleries where the spectators of means were seated, the stage with its doors into the tiring house, the curtained discovery space, the trapdoor, the two pillars supporting the roof over the stage, and finally, the dirt floor of the pit. But this shot does more than show us what an Elizabethan theatre looked like. It also serves to situate the theatre between the sky and the earth, just as the Elizabethan stage in theatres like the Globe was located between the heavens, or the canopy over the stage, which was often painted with the signs of the zodiac, and hell, or the area under the stage, from which ghosts, devils, and other undesirables were prone to emerge; the camera finally settles on the playbill for a play entitled 'The Lamentable Tragedie of the Moneylender Reveng'd'. This shot is immediately followed by a fast zoom shot across the stage and through into the tiring house to reveal an unfortunate Philip Henslowe with his feet suspended over a brazier. The film's opening titles have informed us that Henslowe is 'a businessman with a cash flow problem', and the thug who is toasting Henslowe's boots is employed by none other than Hugh Fennyman the moneylender. The moneylender is getting his revenge in 'real life' just as, presumably, he does in the play, which reminds us that, as Shakespeare says, 'All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players'.

Shakespeare's 'seven ages of man' speech from As You Like It famously illustrates the metaphor of the theatre of the world. Antonio similarly asserts in The Merchant of Venice that 'I hold the world but as the world ..., / A stage, where every man must

play a part' (1.1.77-8), Macbeth declares that 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage' (5.5.24-5), and in his Apology for Actors Thomas Heywood writes: 'our play's begun / When we are borne, and to the world first enter, / And all finde exits when their parts are done' (cited in Yates, 164). This family of metaphor derives, as Frances Yates contends, from the symbolism inherent in the design of the Elizabethan theatre. She argues that the first English theatres were based on the ground plan of the Vitruvian classical theatre, which consisted of four equilateral triangles drawn within a circle, and represented the cosmic circle of the zodiac.¹⁵ Just as the Vitruvian image of the man within the square and the circle, famously represented in Leonardo da Vinci's sketch, was, in Yates's words, 'a statement in symbolic geometry of man's relation to the cosmos, of man the Microcosm whose harmonious constitution relates him to the harmonies of the Macrocosm' (1969, 133), so the Elizabethan theatre was most probably also an exercise in symbolic geometry which centred around the relationship of the Microcosm to the Macrocosm. In this construction, the theatre, and particularly the stage, stood for the world: the most famous of the Elizabethan theatres was, after all, named the Globe and its emblem is thought to have been an image of Hercules carrying the world; and, in a poem written after witnessing the ruins of the first Globe which burned down in 1613, Ben Jonson declared: 'See the world's ruins' (Yates, 159). Thus, Yates concludes, '[h]is theatre would have been for Shakespeare the pattern of the universe, the idea of the Macrocosm, the world stage on which the Microcosm acted his parts' (189).

This metaphor of the theatre of the world is succinctly represented in the opening minutes of Shakespeare in Love, and is present throughout the film, both in the

symbolic architecture of the Rose and the Curtain theatres, which feature prominently, and significantly in the fundamental premise of the film's narrative: just as the money-lender gets his revenge on and off the stage at the beginning of the film, so the Romeo and Juliet narrative derives, according to Shakespeare in Love, from 'real life'; Shakespeare translates his off-stage love affair with Viola de Lesseps from the lady's bedchamber to the stage of the Rose, and plays out the relationship on stage as he cannot in reality. Thus, while the film's construction of writing in terms of biographical determinism is still problematic, its depiction of the inter-relationship of life in the world and plays on the stage is representative, in part, of the Elizabethan theatre's symbolic representation of the stage as the venue for working out the trials of life.¹⁶

This leads me to the second of the extended metaphors which are predominant throughout Shakespeare in Love. This conceit constructs Hollywood as an allegory for the Elizabethan theatre by, as Richard Burt puts it, 'ingeniously projecting contemporary aspects of film production back onto Shakespeare's theatre' (Burnett and Wray, 217).¹⁷ The references to the Hollywood film industry in Shakespeare in Love are many, and they provide, among other things, much of the comic energy of the film. Shakespeare is constantly recognised by members of the public not as a poet, as he would like, but as an actor, and he endures an ongoing struggle to escape from the shadow of his great rival, the famous Christopher Marlowe, and earn recognition as a poet in his own right. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for which Will is in therapy, as all great writers surely are. The water taxi operator who announces to Shakespeare that 'strangely enough, I'm a bit of a writer m'self' is an allusion to the ubiquitous model of the taxi-driver with a script who finally gets a famous director in

his cab, and Henslowe's stuttering tailor with aspirations to be an actor is likewise desperate to break into the industry. Edward Alleyn, the lead actor of the Admiral's Men, is portrayed in the film as the quintessential Hollywood star: upon arriving back at the Rose after a tour in the country to find a rehearsal underway, he demands to know: 'what is the play and what is my part?'; and Will persuades him to take the part of Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet by informing him that the play is entitled 'Mercutio'. The waiter in the players' tavern can be heard announcing that 'the special today is a pig's foot marinated in juniper berry vinegar, served on a buckwheat pancake', but this dialogue between Henslowe and Fennyman's boys about the Rose's new play is perhaps the best example of this technique:

Henslowe: It's a crowd-tickler: mistaken identities, shipwreck, pirate king, a bit with a dog, and love triumphant!

Fennyman's thug: I think I've seen it. I didn't like it.

Henslowe: But this time it's by Shakespeare!

Fennyman: What's it called?

Henslowe: 'Romeo and Ethel the Pirate's Daughter'.

Fennyman: Good title.

The evocation of Hollywood in Shakespeare in Love is symptomatic of popular culture's determined but troubled efforts to appropriate Shakespeare. The juxtaposition of metaphors in this film, the collision of the metaphysical system of signification inherent in the Elizabethan theatre and the economic system of commodity exchange which comprises the Hollywood industry, represented by the relationship between art and life set up by the transformation of Will's relationship with Viola into the text of Romeo and Juliet, seems determined not just to popularise but to postmodernise Shakespeare. Milner states that

postmodernist art typically attempts, or at least results from, the collapse of [the] antithesis between high and low, elite and popular Almost all the available theorizations of postmodernism agree on the centrality of this progressive deconstruction and dissolution of the high/low cultural distinction.

(1996, 56)

Subsuming the theatre of the world within the context of the Hollywood film industry seems to represent 'the two-way link in postmodernism between art and consumer culture demolishing one of the most powerful modernist binaries' emphasised by critics of the postmodern (Goodall, 59),¹⁸ but Shakespeare in Love, like Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream, is finally unable to deconstruct the binary opposition between high and popular culture because of its celebration of the redemptive qualities of the Shakespearean text.

At the first performance of Romeo and Juliet at the Curtain in Shakespeare in Love, the majority of the audience is utterly overcome by the beauty and tragedy of the love story, just as the fairies in Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream are transported by the recording of 'Casta Diva' and the audience of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' are moved to tears by Thisbe's dying monologue. In this way, Shakespeare in Love may be seen to be, along with Hoffman's film, equally implicated in the modernist schema which argues that art will redeem the masses. However, the makers of Shakespeare in Love acknowledge something that Hoffman does not, which is that any audience, whether that of the Elizabethan playhouse or the multiplex, will have a variety of responses to a text. Just as the audience of Shakespeare's Globe was diverse in terms of class, education, and experience, so the audience of a Shakespearean film will bring different kinds of knowledge about Shakespeare to the film, and the audience of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare in Love suggests not only the potential range of

responses, but also that those responses are influenced by factors of education and, in the case of Shakespeare in Love, class (which, in the Elizabethan period, tends to amount to the same thing) – cultural capital, in other words.

When Juliet awakes in the tomb and looks for Romeo, Viola's nurse exclaims that he is 'dead!', and a trio of prostitutes standing at the foot of the stage are in tears at the deaths of the lovers, while the urchin Webster confesses that what he really liked was the bit when Juliet stabbed herself. On the other hand, the wealthy women sitting near Viola's nurse are visibly less moved than she, while Lord Wessex may be seen in the gallery shrinking at the indignity of being caught at the theatre – the ability of Shakespeare's verse to transmit pure emotion has failed to dispel Wessex's anger at misplacing his wife – and Queen Elizabeth, who was earlier guilty of the offence of coughing throughout The Two Gentlemen of Verona, responds not to the emotion of the play but to the academic question of whether or not it could be said to show 'the very truth and nature of love'.

Shakespeare in Love makes various attempts to address and cater for the diversity of its audience by means of, for instance, a mainstream heterosexual love story for those viewers who haven't the least idea who John Webster is, let alone why he should have a fascination with blood, guts and violence, and a series of clever in-jokes for the academics: Shakespeare's experimentation with the spelling of his surname, the prostitute who recognises Shakespeare as 'William the Conqueror' (a reference to a story about Burbage as Richard III and Shakespeare), Shakespeare's insistence that Henslowe still owes him for one gentleman of Verona, and so on.¹⁹ Those viewers for whom Shakespeare in Love's in-jokes were intended will also know that John

Webster was never a street urchin, that Shakespeare didn't divide his plays into acts and scenes, at least at this point in his career, and that he is supposed by scholars to have written in secretary rather than Roman script. But even though the film teases that portion of the audience for allowing themselves to be flattered, the distinction between those with symbolic capital and those without is nevertheless maintained.

The most telling responses of those in the audience of the inaugural performance of Romeo and Juliet are those of the puritan preacher, who was earlier to be seen decrying the playhouses as hotbeds of sin on a Bankside street corner, and Hugh Fennyman the moneylender, whose interest in the theatre did not stretch beyond recouping his debts. Both are redeemed by the drama: the puritan is utterly enraptured, and laughs, weeps, and kisses his hands at the players in praise, while Hugh Fennyman forgets all fiscal considerations under the influence of Shakespeare's poetry. It is the responses of the puritan and the moneylender which expose most clearly the modernist agenda at the heart of Madden's concertedly postmodernist enterprise. Goodall argues that,

[w]hereas many writers in the past, even modernist writers like James Joyce, had 'quoted' from popular texts, in the process of reinforcing the reader's sense of the stratification of culture, the postmodern directly incorporates them, gladly abdicating art's traditional responsibility to differentiate levels of culture.

(59)

Shakespeare in Love, like Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream, is ultimately unable to dispense with the oppositional system of differentiation by which different kinds of culture are identified. Both films finally and tellingly rely on the modernist paradigm which insists that art will redeem the masses, and that Shakespeare, as art, has that transcendental power to redeem.

In Chapter Seven I will continue my account of cultural studies, and its potential for application in the secondary classroom through the analysis of Shakespearean film, with a discussion of Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, a film which, like the two films discussed in this chapter, tackles the loaded question of Shakespeare's place in popular culture, but which does not betray the same reliance on the modernist belief in Shakespeare's redemptive qualities.

¹ Shakespeare's success at the Oscars is not unprecedented, of course. Reinhardt and Dieterle's A Midsummer Night's Dream (1935), Cukor's Romeo and Juliet (1936), Olivier's Henry V (1946), Mankiewicz's Julius Caesar (1953), and Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet (1968) were all nominated for Best Picture, and that award went to Olivier's Hamlet in 1948 and West Side Story in 1961 before the success of Shakespeare in Love in 1999. Shakespeare in Love is nevertheless the most successful Shakespearean film since West Side Story (which won ten Oscars compared to the later film's seven). See Rosenthal (188-9) for more information on Shakespeare's history at the Academy Awards.

² Strinati explains the emergence of 'mass society' as follows:

The eradication of agrarian based work tied to the land, the destruction of the tightly knit village community, the decline of religion and the secularisation of societies associated with the growth of scientific knowledge, the spread of mechanised, monotonous and alienating factory work, the establishment of patterns of living in large anomic cities populated by anonymous crowds, the relative absence of moral integration ... lie behind the emergence of a mass society and mass culture Mass society consists of ... people who lack any meaningful or morally coherent relationships with each other.

(Strinati, 6)

³ Goodall notes that this institutionalisation of the canon is usually seen as a product of the work of F.R. Leavis and his group at Cambridge in the 1930s (although he goes on to insist on the wider framework of European modernism of which the work of the Leavises was a part) (22).

⁴ 'Symbolic capital' is one of the two aspects of cultural capital disseminated, according to Guillory, by means of the literary syllabus. The other is 'linguistic capital' or 'the means by which one attains to a socially credentialed and therefore valued speech, otherwise known as "Standard English"' (ix).

⁵ CNN Entertainment News: 'Shakespeare in Hollywood'.

⁶ I am grateful to David Hale for pointing out to me that Flockhart was cast as Helena before the first series of Ally McBeal aired in the United States, but as the film was

not released until Ally McBeal was a familiar and very popular character among television viewers in the United States and beyond, Flockhart's presence in the film creates inevitable parallels between Helena and the character whose portrayal made her famous, and between the thematic concerns of A Midsummer Night's Dream and Ally McBeal.

⁷ Everett's flawless English accent probably had greater appeal to Hoffman than his gay rights activism when it came to the question of casting Oberon.

⁸ The supposed universality of the romantic love narrative obscures a number of differences in the cultural understandings of heterosexual love, as documented in Belsey's Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), and, while my blanket use of the term 'romantic love' tends to elide the various permutations of expressions of love and desire described by Belsey, I use it precisely in order to signal the continuity that is perceived (by defenders of Shakespeare's universality, for example) between the Shakespearean narrative and the Hollywood film.

⁹ Other operas featured include Donizetti's L'élisir d'Amore (1832), Bellini's Norma (1833), Verdi's La Traviata (1853), and Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana (1890).

¹⁰ 'A door opened', Hoffman writes. 'Standing before me were Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, the entire *bel canto* tradition I love so deeply, with its wit, playfulness and sublime naivete' (Hoffman, CD Soundtrack cover).

¹¹ MacDonald Jackson notes that the arias included in the film's soundtrack gesture towards the thematic concerns of the play/film, although I am inclined to think that their being in Italian must minimise the effects of this thematic mirroring for non-Italian speakers.

¹² Jackson notes that 'Hoffman's "magical otherworld" is essentially that of Greek and Roman art and literature, as mediated by the Renaissance, and later by nineteenth-century painting' (Jackson, 37), although I am inclined to question further the nature of that mediation, and the status of the individual texts.

¹³ In particular the film makes use of the bicycle, notably as a kind of Vaudevillian comic prop, as Nunn does in his Twelfth Night.

¹⁴ Indeed, commentators have understood the mechanicals' anxiety at the apparent realism of the drama, which, being violent, may frighten the ladies present and get

them hanged as punishment, as Shakespeare's joke about the groundlings' supposed inability to distinguish between drama and real life.

¹⁵ Yates also argues that James Burbage may have read about Vitruvius's classical theatre in John Dee's Preface to Euclid, published in 1570; the Theatre was built in 1576.

¹⁶ What is more, it might be pointed out that Shakespeare in Love also models something closer to the cultural materialist theory regarding Shakespeare's process of composition, in that Will is seen to be drawing inspiration and material from the everyday life of Bankside society. The line 'A plague on both your houses', for example, is directly plagiarised from the speech of a puritan preacher denouncing the theatres.

¹⁷ Although Hollywood is constructed as an allegory for the Elizabethan theatre largely through the interpolation of a series of clichés associated with the Hollywood machine, the parallel itself is nonetheless a useful one for, as Michael Bristol observes, 'Shakespeare's vocation can ... be interpreted both as the practice of a craft and as the production of a commodity in the context of a nascent show business'. Michael D. Bristol. Big-time Shakespeare. London and New York: Routledge, 1996 (58).

¹⁸ Goodall notes that this is a particular feature of the work of Fredric Jameson.

¹⁹ Even Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, which so consciously and unapologetically targets a youth market, can't resist throwing in a few nods to scholars and Shakespeareans: Romeo and Benvolio play pool at the Globe theatre, and billboards around Verona Beach feature lines from elsewhere in the Shakespeare canon.

Chapter 7

Intertextuality and Subcultures:

Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet

It's about reclaiming Shakespeare for the popular audience for which it was written ... It['s] about entertaining, communicating and revealing a story.

(Baz Luhrmann)

Romeo and Juliet, you know. Everyone knows it.

(Leonardo DiCaprio)

The notions of culture and the cultural currency of Shakespeare with which I was concerned in Chapter Six bring me to the final chapter of this thesis, and inevitably to Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film, William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, which has been acclaimed around the world for its paradoxically double achievement of radicalising Shakespeare and at the same time renewing and revitalising interest in the Bard of Avon among the public at large, and particularly among young people. Many teachers choose to show this film as part of the study of Romeo and Juliet because of its obvious and deliberate youth appeal, but it is in my opinion crucial for teachers and students to be able to engage productively with this film in a way that goes beyond students enjoying 'Shakespeare' more or less, or understanding 'the play' better or worse.

Luhrmann has repeatedly insisted upon the purportedly populist agenda of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, claiming that his intention was to make a film that would liberate Shakespeare from the academic and theatre élite (which he has denigratingly referred to as 'Club Shakespeare') and '[reclaim] Shakespeare for the popular audience for which it was written'. However, Luhrmann's reference to 'Shakespeare' as 'it' is symptomatic of a tendency to conflate Shakespeare the dramatist with the plays he wrote, and to use Shakespeare's name as a blanket term for all that the man and his works are held to signify in Western culture: this is what the cultural materialists denominate the 'Shakespeare myth'. As John Drakakis observes, 'the customary elision of "Shakespeare" and Shakespearean texts as the signifiers of a mystified creativity serves as the main channel through which their joint status as "myth" is reinforced' (Holderness, 36). Luhrmann also subscribes to the universalist school, insisting in an episode of The Southbank Show about Shakespeare made in 2000 that Shakespeare 'revealed absolutely the primary templates to the human condition'. Thus he shows himself to be fully implicated in the retroactive school of bard worship in opposition to which certain prominent groups within the academy, particularly those concerned with the matter of culture, are situated.

Sinfield argues that '[Shakespeare's] name and the texts we associate with it have mythic status: they represent truths that transcend particular circumstances. That is the idealist conception of myth. But in a materialist analysis, meanings are *made* continuously' (Holderness, 129). Luhrmann's statements represent the idealist conception of myth, but his film demonstrates the potential for the materialist version, in which meanings are made through the unconstrained interaction of the

Shakespearean text with other texts and genres. David Hornbrook contends that, '[i]n a crucial sense, Shakespeare tells us who we are; not as he reveals the "universal dilemmas of mankind", the unchanging truths of the liberal imagination, but in his relationship with us, through the Shakespeare myth itself' (Holderness, 156). Luhrmann's film engages in just this enterprise: it is precisely because the director believes in the Shakespeare myth that his film reveals the nature of the relationship between 'Shakespeare' and turn of the millennium Western society. The title of the film insists that it is William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet even while it takes any number of liberties with Shakespeare's text (in the classical sense) in the interests of bringing it into the twenty-first century. As Terry Eagleton observes in the afterword of that volume, The Shakespeare Myth proposes 'replacing the study of Shakespeare with the study of "Shakespeare"' (Holderness, 207), or, in other words, replacing the study of the plays with the study of Shakespeare's signifying power in Western culture. This is the kind of approach to studying the works of Shakespeare in the classroom that Luhrmann's film permits, and that it will be my goal to advocate in this final chapter.

In Chapter Four I quoted Peter Holland's proposal of a shift of focus away from 'the history of the study of Shakespeare films as versions of Shakespeare performance', and towards 'the nature of the cultural circumstances that generate the object – Shakespeare films – which provides the material body for our gaze' (Burnett and Wray, xii), and it is just such a shift that William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet encourages, providing an ideal template for the kind of project in which the 'cultural circumstances' of a text's production are of paramount interest and importance, not only in the Reader-Response terms that I outlined in my discussion of films of Hamlet

in Chapter Four, but because, like Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Luhrmann's film sources visual and audio material from other pre-existing texts.

What differentiates Luhrmann's method from Hoffman's, though, is the kind of use to which the intertextual material is put. As I argued in Chapter Six, Hoffman employs material from various sources and different régimes of culture which function largely as cultural markers: fragments of operatic texts and visual references to Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist paintings represent art, or Culture with a capital C, Tinker Bell-esque fairies and the evocation of the character of Ally McBeal stand in for popular culture, and the band of thieving dwarves introduces the notion of culture exchange between the different registers, all of which culminate in the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' at the end of the film. In other words, Hoffman uses these texts as markers of their own cultural status in the service of a system of cultural exchange at the heart of which is the validating myth of the redemptive power of art, and, in particular, of Shakespeare. It is this reliance on the modernist paradigm which finally cripples Hoffman's attempt to make a truly popular Shakespearean film.

Luhrmann, on the other hand, deploys references to popular cultural texts and to subcultural forms and practices in the service of an engagement with youth subcultures. While his public comments about his intentions with regard to the cultural project of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, cited earlier, implicate him in the tradition of bardolatry to which Hoffman and the makers of Shakespeare in Love also belong, his film is designed to prove not that Shakespeare will redeem the masses, but that Shakespeare *belongs* to the masses, even that Shakespeare is *of* the masses.

Besides the tacit bard-worship of the directors of both films, Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet has other features in common with Shakespeare in Love. In particular, both films are concerned with the cultural significance of the Romeo and Juliet narrative, and both rely on its apparent universality and its ubiquity as, in Harris's words, 'the validating myth of heterosexual desire in Western culture' (185). But where Shakespeare in Love finally resorts to the modernist belief in the redemptive power of the Shakespearean text which is able to win over even its most severe and insensitive detractors, the puritan preacher and Hugh Fennyman the moneylender, Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet is concerned, rather, to tell the story of Romeo and Juliet's mediated representation: to acknowledge its status as a text which is continually retold, as, indeed, it is in Shakespeare in Love.

Where Hoffman's A Midsummer Night's Dream and Madden's Shakespeare in Love are unable, ultimately, to resolve the divisions and distinctions between Shakespeare as high art and the Hollywood film as popular culture, Luhrmann's film adopts a cultural populist approach. During explains cultural populism in this way:

[t]he discipline of [cultural studies] began to celebrate commercial culture, in a move I will call 'cultural populism'. Cultural populism became possible within the cultural studies anti-hegemonic tradition because, despite the new right's reliance on values disseminated through the cultural market [national unity, the family, the non-interventionist state, free market forces], the right also buttressed its monoculturalism by traditionalist appeals to the canon What form has cultural populism taken in cultural studies? It too turned away from the highly theoretical attacks on hegemony so important in the 1970s, this time by arguing that at least some popular-cultural products themselves

have positive quasi-political effects independently of education and critical discourse.

(17)

I want to examine the cultural populism of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet in two ways: firstly, by analysing the film's portrayal of Romeo and Juliet's mediated status as Western culture's pre-eminent tale of romantic love; and secondly, by exploring Luhrmann's citation of popular cultural texts and his references to youth subcultures, which function to brand the film as a postmodern site characterised by the creativity of popular youth culture. Luhrmann draws on the visual and filmic codes of the teen film, the western, the Hollywood romance, the action film, and the MTV genre, which, along with the self-conscious and anti-naturalistic use of the camera, serves to draw attention to the artifice of the medium, foregrounding its very filmic nature. William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet is also aware of its filmic predecessors, particularly Franco Zeffirelli's famous Romeo and Juliet of 1968, and the multiple Oscar-winning musical West Side Story of 1961. But I will begin by examining the way the film's conception and construction respond to the cultural meanings accruing to the Romeo and Juliet narrative, and the way that this narrative is accorded a powerful generic and epistemological status by the composition and editing of the filmic prologue and through the use of the television as a framing device.

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet begins with its ending. The prologue to Act 1 informs us that the 'two hours' traffic' of the play will conclude with the deaths of the 'star-cross'd lovers': as Armstrong observes, '[f]rom the outset – from the Prologue, in fact – Romeo and Juliet's choice of each other as love objects is simultaneously the choice of their mutual deaths' (193). The prologue also details the feud between the

lovers' families, the civil disturbances which arise as a manifestation of this enmity, and the reconciliation of the houses which follows the deaths of their children. Just as the dramatic prologue of Shakespeare's text encapsulates the action of the whole play, so the filmic prologue of Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet not only introduces the audience to the world of the film and its principal inhabitants, as I discussed in Chapter Two, but reveals what is to come by means of a series of flash cuts from throughout the filmic narrative. Diana Harris calls the introduction of Luhrmann's film 'a prologue that is also an epilogue' (191).

The 'ancient grudge' between the Montagues and the Capulets is established visually as corporate rivalry with probable Mafia elements through the shot of a pair of skyscrapers bearing the names of the houses and standing on either side of a huge statue of Christ. A sequence featuring burning cars, fleeing and terrified citizens, and a skyscape filled with police helicopters represents Shakespeare's 'new mutiny', and these scenes of civil disturbance and the arrival of the police to quell the violence recur in the later sequence in the film depicting the first brawl between the Montagues and the Capulets. Likewise, the shots that introduce the audience to the main characters are not purpose-made images, but are taken from the body of the film. These shots and scenes are largely descriptive, providing images to accompany or explain the lines of Shakespeare's prologue which are spoken by the news reader and then in voice-over. But after this, a sequence of legends of the first six lines of the prologue to Shakespeare's play is immediately followed by a rapid montage of shots bringing together disparate and non-sequential moments from throughout the film: the fireworks at the Capulet party, the apothecary opening his door to Romeo, Juliet in her wedding veil the night before her planned marriage to Paris, the death of Tybalt,

the altar boy singing at Romeo and Juliet's wedding, the death of Mercutio, Lady Capulet arraying herself as Cleopatra, and the first brawl.

Luhrmann's filmic prologue also gives us a fleeting glimpse of Romeo as he enters Juliet's tomb, and shows us, from Romeo's point of view, the bier where he will soon lie alongside his bride, and these shots, along with the repeated use in this passage of the line 'A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life',¹ comprehensively insist upon the tragic outcome of the narrative. In this way, the visual content of the film's prologue reiterates the verbal prognostication of Shakespeare's prologue by anticipating the scene in which Romeo arrives at the Capulet monument to join his wife in death. But it also operates in a way that transcends both the narrative and structural function of the prologue to Act 1 and the play's extensive use of imagery of fate and the stars (both of which insist on the predestination of the story's outcome), as an analysis of the final moments of the film reveals.

In a counterbalance to the prolepsis of the film's opening, the sequence immediately following Juliet's suicide at the end of Luhrmann's film comprises a backward-looking montage in which several shots of the dead lovers on the bier are intercut with images of their first glimpse of each other through the fish tank, of Juliet's wedding band bearing the inscription 'I love thee', of the swirling white sheets of the marriage-bed on the morning of Romeo's departure for Mantua, and finally, of the underwater kiss which had sealed both the plighting of the lovers' troth, and their fate.² This conclusion, combined with the use of proleptic flash cuts in the prologue, serves to represent Romeo and Juliet as a recursive love story, which ends when it begins and begins again as it ends: just as the Prince proposes the re-telling of events at the end

of the play, so the conclusion of Luhrmann's film reiterates the love story through the use of analeptic visual clips, and demonstrates that the Romeo and Juliet narrative is, as Harris calls it, 'a recurring dream of modern humanity' (184).

But these two passages also show us that the death of the lovers is simultaneous with their meeting, their marriage, and its consummation, and every action in the film, as in the play, appertains to every other action: the events of the Capulet party lead indirectly to Romeo's need for the services of the apothecary, Juliet's marriage to Paris is arranged as a remedy for the grief surrounding Tybalt's death, Romeo refuses Tybalt's challenge because of his marriage to Juliet which leads to the death of Mercutio, and so on. This is a much more sophisticated presentation of a narrative than is implied by Luhrmann's favourite battle-cry about 'telling a story': the film's editing, particularly at key moments such as the prologue and the ending, exposes and deconstructs the workings of the Romeo and Juliet narrative.

Such a strategy responds to the prognosticatory emphasis of the narrative and the pervasive sense of the impact of the workings of fate on the lives of the characters, and it also parallels the way in which Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet exists as both a commodity and an icon within Western culture. The play functions within popular as well as literary culture as the predominant exemplar of romantic love, especially thwarted or doomed love, and Romeo and Juliet themselves are the paradigmatic tragic lovers: even those who have never read the play know that Romeo and Juliet share a great love and then die at the end, and therefore their love is always inseparable from their deaths, both because the outcome of the love story is already

known, and because the reason for their cultural centrality and longevity is the very fact of their deaths. Hawkes argues of Hamlet that,

[i]n our society, in which Hamlet finds itself embedded in the ideology in a number of roles, the play has, for complex social and historical reasons, always already begun. And on to its beginning we have always already imprinted a knowledge of its course of action, and its ending.

(1986, 94)

The same is also true of Romeo and Juliet, whose ideological deployment as the paradigmatic tale of tragic love relies on and perpetuates a pre-knowledge of the lovers' deaths at the end of the play. Luhrmann's construction of the beginning and ending of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet similarly acknowledges the kind of simultaneity of events, of cause and effect, that, Hawkes argues, pertain to Hamlet.

Luhrmann's film also acknowledges the cultural omnipresence of Romeo and Juliet through the use of television as a framing metaphor. It begins and ends with a television news anchor, who opens the film with the words of the Prologue to Act 1, and concludes it with lines borrowed from the Prince's final speech. This use of the television as a framing metaphor functions as an equivalent of or answer to the play's metadramatic use of the Chorus: as Luhrmann comments, 'I have used the idea of television as the storyteller. TV is kind of the chorus of our lives' (Ward, D6). However, Luhrmann's allocation of lines to the news anchor represents a modification of Shakespeare's dramatic structure, which introduces the action of Acts 1 and 2 with a prologue before allowing the tragic impetus of the narrative to drive the play to its conclusion; the framing metaphor of the news anchor, by contrast, encloses the narrative. In this way the use of the television and the news anchor may be read as a device which points towards the dissemination of Shakespeare's play as the

paradigmatic narrative of doomed (teenage) love: the story of Romeo and Juliet is being told over again, this time as a kind of television documentary.

What is perhaps the most interesting detail of this metadramatic frame is the static on the television screen which precedes and concludes the news anchor's report. Static is mainly associated with the media of radio and television, signifying the temporary absence of a signal (and in the days before continuous programming it represented the end of transmission). However, in Luhrmann's film, it appears to function as a more complex trope: the fade to static rather than to black suggests that the story we have just witnessed has been heard before, and will be heard again: it is on a loop. What is more, the television screen featuring the news anchor appears within the frame of the shot, and the camera zooms in on it: in this way, the framing device is itself framed. While the television screen fades to static, the film itself fades to black. By representing Romeo and Juliet as a television documentary framed by a film, William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet has offered a particular kind of comment on the afterlife of Shakespeare's text in Western culture as a story which is told over and over, which is both television and film, both news and fiction. Finally, while society will continue to tell and re-tell the story of Shakespeare's tragic lovers, this film has finished its own version, not only of the story of the lovers, but of the story of the story of the lovers in late twentieth-century Western culture.

Another crucial feature of the culturally populist approach of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet is its extensive body of references to other texts, stories, genres and subcultural practices from twentieth-century popular culture. The notion of

intertextuality, developed by Julia Kristeva from Bakhtin's notion of the polyphonic text, is significant to any analysis of the circulation of cultural meanings since it

concerns the relation of a given text to other texts. Any text ... can be analysed in terms of the other texts that it has absorbed and transformed. Thus intertextuality embraces various forms of textual borrowing and echoing, such as allusion, parody, pastiche and quotation.

(Baldwin et. al., 40)

Loehlin points out that '[o]ne of the chief aesthetic devices of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, and one of the hallmarks of a postmodern cinema, is intertextuality – the reference to other works, genres and styles, whether as homage, parody, simple imitation or even unconscious duplication. Luhrmann's film is a compendium of references to twentieth-century popular culture' (Burnett and Wray, 124). As I noted above, the intertextual references in William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet point to genres including the Western, the action film, the teen film, MTV, and the Hollywood love story, as well as to its two most significant mainstream predecessors, Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet and the film version of the Broadway musical West Side Story.³ Luhrmann cites these texts in the service of the youth cultural agenda of his film. By referencing filmic codes and styles that his young, media-savvy audience can read, he both acknowledges the creativity rather than the passivity of the popular audience, in opposition to those theories about the hegemony of the culture industry most commonly associated with Adorno, and validates the skills and knowledge of an audience which may be lacking in the kind of symbolic capital that would allow it to read, for example, the references to high culture in Hoffman's film.

Loehlin identifies characteristics which locate William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet in the tradition of the 'teen film', a genre which was

part of the emergence of a distinctive youth culture in the decades following the second world war. Unsupervised teenagers with time on their hands formed both a national social concern and a fertile commercial market. Hollywood responded to this phenomenon with some films that portrayed teens as menacing delinquents ... but just as often with films that showed them as sensitive idealists misunderstood by their shallow, vain and greedy parents.

(Burnett and Wray, 122)

This was the genre epitomised by Rebel Without a Cause of 1955, whose three main characters (played by James Dean, Natalie Wood, and Sal Mineo) represent 'a variation on the Romeo/Juliet/Mercutio triangle' (Burnett and Wray, 122). 'William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet repeatedly associates itself with this tradition' (Burnett and Wray, 122), Loehlin continues, particularly in Romeo's first appearance after the prologue, which deliberately evokes James Dean as Jim Stark. Luhrmann himself has called Romeo 'the original rebel without a cause, the first James Dean' (cit. Burnett and Wray, 123).

Shakespeare's Romeo, on the other hand, is at first sight less a dissatisfied rebel, epitomising cool as he scribbles oxymoronic poetry in a notebook, and more a test-case for the increasingly recognised medical ailment of early modern lovesickness. Carol Thomas Neely observes that

[i]n medical traditions from the second to the seventeenth century, lovesickness is characterized as a disease of the head, heart, imagination, and genitals, and associated with the melancholy humor. Its powerful somatic symptoms, the most agreed-upon aspect of the malady, are summed up in Jacques Ferrand's Treatise on Lovesickness ... : 'pale and wan complexion, ... a slow fever, ... palpitations of the heart, swelling of the face, depraved appetite, a sense of grief, sighing, causeless tears, insatiable hunger, raging thirst, fainting, oppressions,

suffocations, insomnia, headaches, melancholy, epilepsy, madness, uterine fury, satyriasis, and other pernicious symptoms that are, for the most part, without mitigation or cure’.

(Lenz, Greene and Neely, 279).

While Romeo does not appear to be suffering from facial swelling or uterine fury, his behaviour at the opening of the play is characterised by melancholy, and Montague’s account of his behaviour points to several other of the symptoms described by Ferrand:

Many a morning hath he ... been seen,
 With tears augmenting the fresh morning’s dew,
 Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs:
 But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
 Should in the furthest east begin to draw
 The shady curtains from Aurora’s bed,
 Away from light steals home my heavy son,
 And private in his chamber pens himself,
 Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
 And makes himself an artificial night.

(1.1.136-45)

Added to the sighing, insomnia, and ‘sense of grief’, Romeo’s speech and behaviour cause Benvolio to ask ‘Why, Romeo, are you mad?’ (1.2.55), and, while his ailment does not extend to satyriasis, he does demonstrate a particular frustration at his beloved’s determination to ‘live chaste’ (1.1.223). Luhrmann’s appropriation of the symptoms of lovesickness as the marks of James Dean-like cool signals the extent to which William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet is subsumed in the aura of the teen film, in a way that acknowledges and celebrates the knowledge of a (young) popular audience who will recognise and read the cultural symbol of James Dean much more readily than the symptoms of Renaissance lovesickness.

Another mark of the film's identification with the teen film is its several references to another well known exemplar of that genre, West Side Story. Like Rebel Without a Cause and other similar examples, the film version of Stephen Sondheim and Leonard Bernstein's Broadway musical focuses on the younger generation of the characters from Shakespeare's play, and in this case the parents of the lovers are completely absent. William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet most obviously evokes West Side Story in its portrayal of the warring Montagues and Capulets as teenage gangs divided along ethnic lines: the white American Jets parallel Luhrmann's Kennedyesque Montagues, and the Puerto Rican Sharks become the more generally Latino Capulets. The family enmity is also represented at an adult level as a corporate rivalry with which the ethnicised teenage gangs do not form an obvious connection: the effect is to present the youth as separate and differentiated from the black tie, stretch limousine business world of the older generation in the vein of the teen film genre. While Coppélia Kahn argues that 'the feud provides ... an activity in which [the sons of the houses] prove themselves men by phallic violence on behalf of their fathers' (Lenz, Greene and Neely, 173), Luhrmann's evocation of the thematic structure of the teen film implies that the restless and explosive violence of the younger generation is the product not of the influence of the patriarchal feud but of the lack of interest of the older generation. The style of Luhrmann's portrayal of the rival Montague and Capulet gangs also functions as a display of subcultural capital, a point to which I shall return later in this chapter.

Luhrmann's intertextual references to films which deploy the Romeo and Juliet narrative in the service of youth culture, such as Rebel Without a Cause and West Side Story, represent the continuing tradition in which the story of Shakespeare's

lovers is perpetuated and utilised by popular culture. Just as the editing of Luhrmann's prologue and epilogue teamed with the framing metaphor of the television news report represent the culturally symbolic function of the Romeo and Juliet narrative as the paradigmatic tale of both romantic love and doomed love, so the intertextual references to the teen film stand for another cultural function of this narrative: in the tradition of the teen film, Romeo and Juliet stands for the destructive effects of the generation gap and the neglect of youth.⁴ Rather than seeking to define the status of the Shakespearean text as high or popular culture, Luhrmann's film aligns it with a body of popular texts whose thematic concerns relate to youth culture and the relationship between the generations. William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet joins a tradition of Hollywood films which has deployed the Romeo and Juliet narrative in the service of the concerns and characteristics of youth culture.

While the gangs of Luhrmann's film recall West Side Story and the concerns of the teen film, the first and second brawl scenes, in which they figure most prominently, are characterised by references to the Western and the action film. The opening brawl scene of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet is a site in which the visual codes of the action film and the Western are significantly apparent. Harris, discussing this scene, calls the film 'a kind of urban Western – these are posses of kerosene cowboys, men and mean machines, riding on a lot of horsepower, playing out their macho games in phallic hotrods' (191-2), while Loehlin describes the brawl scene which opens Luhrmann's film proper as a postmodern site of 'pastiche, parody and pop culture':

The Capulet/Montague feud is rendered in the style of action-film *auteurs*, Sergio Leone and John Woo. Guitar chords and eerie whistlings evoke Ennio

Morricone's trademark western scores, while close-up slow-motion and freeze-frame shots of Tybalt lighting a cheroot, then crushing out the match with the silver heel of his cowboy boot, quote shots of Clint Eastwood in A Fistful of Dollars and Charles Bronson in Once Upon a Time in the West. The freeze-frame introduction of the characters with onscreen titles ... recalls the opening of The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. Once the showdown starts, the fast editing, changing camera speeds, and especially the slow-motion shots of the leaping Tybalt firing two guns at once, are clearly a parody of, or homage to, the Hong Kong director, John Woo.

(Burnett and Wray, 126)

The brawl scene also switches between registers, from the loud gaucheness and crude gestures of the ridiculous Montague boys, to the highly stylised dress, manners, and gun-fighting codes of Tybalt and his fellow Capulets. Even Tybalt at his most intense, uttering 'Peace? I hate the word', is interrupted and the mood deflated by the squeaky cries of the woman battering Sampson over the head with her handbag.

The second brawl sequence, which features the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, also draws on the visual codes of the Western and the action film, and is similarly characterised by the use of a metadramatic framing device, in this case the proscenium arch of a ruined theatre.⁵ From the moment that Tybalt and his 'boys' arrive on the beach in search of Romeo the Western genre is evoked. Mercutio, Benvolio and the Montagues are sitting around a table, joking and laughing, in a Verona Beach equivalent of the saloon when the Capulets pull up in their black car. They approach Mercutio and his group in the characteristic arrowhead formation, Tybalt the 'bad guy' surrounded and framed by his followers. Even their wide-legged gait and holster-ready hands mimic the stance of the Western villain. The use of extreme close-up shots foregrounds the famous Western glare with which the challenge is made and received, and frequent close-ups of Benvolio and the other

onlookers evoke the characteristic shot of the bar-keeper polishing glasses which always registers the tension preceding a saloon fight. Tybalt's challenge is rendered according to an updated version of the visual codes of the Western gun-fight: Tybalt's second ceremoniously removes all but one bullet from the gun clip and replaces the gun in the holster. The scene is ultimately set for a Western-style showdown with a paradigmatic long shot from behind Tybalt which shows the villain's hand hovering over his holster as his opponent, Mercutio, readies himself for the challenge.⁶

It is the arrival of Romeo, Tybalt's intended opponent, that disrupts the progress of this mini-Western. The change in mood is signalled by a musical shift on the soundtrack, and when Mercutio moves to act as second in response to the challenge described above, Romeo brushes him off. He refuses Tybalt's challenge, speaking to him of love and forgiveness instead of hatred and honour, and committing the fatal Western faux pas of turning his back on his challenger. He finally shatters this sequence's evocation of the Western by offering his gun to Tybalt and entreating him to 'be satisfied' (3.1.77). From this moment on, the scene ceases to draw on the visual codes of the Western, and this signifies Romeo's refusal to participate in the value system that the genre embodies and for which it stands in William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet.

The death of Mercutio precipitates a shift from the stylised and formal visual language of the Western to the rougher and more aggressive visual codes of the action film as Romeo pursues Tybalt in retaliatory rage. The car chase, the edgy and imprecise use of the camera, the frantic battle between Romeo and Tybalt for possession of the single revolver, and Romeo's impassioned fury at the apparent

absence of moral justice, expressed by a soul-wrenching cry of anguish and rage as he shoots his friend's murderer: all quote the action genre. While the first brawl scene drew on the visual techniques of both genres in tandem, the shift from one to the other in the second brawl sequence signals an important progression in the meaning and nature of the violence in Luhrmann's narrative, which may be illustrated by a consideration of the kinds of signification which the intertextual references to the Western and the action film import to William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet.

Lee Clark Mitchell argues that what makes 'the narrative we recognize as a Western' is

a set of problems recurring in endless combination: the problem of progress, envisioned as a passing of frontiers; the problem of honor, defined in a context of social expediency; the problem of law or justice, enacted in a conflict of vengeance and social control; the problem of violence, in acknowledging its value yet honoring occasions when it can be controlled; and subsuming all, the problem of what it means to be a man, as aging victim of progress, embodiment of honor, champion of justice in an unjust world. More than anything else, this persistent obsession with masculinity marks the Western.

(3)

It is this final point about the Western's 'persistent obsession with masculinity' that is most pertinent to the many references in William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet to the Western. Harris argues that this intertextuality is in the service of '[a] re-telling and replacement of the myth of male loyalties, mateship above all, figures of authority not to be trusted, the divisive potential of women and "love" to be avoided at any cost' (191-2).⁷

Mitchell goes on to point out that the action film genre has begun to

usurp the Western's role in assuaging a dominant culture's local anxieties, while at the same time keeping its aesthetic habits (its rhythm of landscape and narrative adventure; its concentration on a male body beaten and convalescent; its investigation of the fragile balance between restraint and violence).

(260)

My contention is that the action film departs from the Western's interrogation of the relationship between masculinity and violence by making this relationship much more problematic through the ambiguous nature of moral justice which characterises that genre. This difference is expressed in Luhrmann's film through the change in visual vocabulary from the Western to the action film. In the Western, the question of justice and the nature of good and evil is clearly established: the 'bad guys' are easily recognisable by their black clothing and horses, and justice essentially resides in the hero. In the action film, the hero is also responsible for administering justice, but how justice is to be achieved is a much more difficult question to answer. Tybalt's highly stylised approach to violence, represented by the use of the codes of the Western, is indicative of a fairly simple expression of masculinity through violence. This becomes complicated by the conflagration at the gas station that turns an ordered gun fight into chaos: the removal of the ordered structure of Tybalt's codes of violence forces him to flee in frustration. The system is further disrupted by Romeo's refusal of Tybalt's challenge, and finally shattered by the clearly accidental (in Luhrmann's version, at least) death of Mercutio. When Romeo kills Tybalt in William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, the deployment of the visual language of the action film signals the point at which violence ceases to be an expression of restless, youthful masculinity and becomes a question of the problematic search for moral justice. The salient point, for the purposes of this discussion of Luhrmann's cultural populism, is that his film signals the shift in the nature of violence, which derives from Shakespeare's text, by

the use of visual and filmic codes and conventions that a youth audience is skilled in decoding.

There is another point to be made about the first and second brawl sequences in William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet and their use of the visual language of the Western and the action film to explore the nature of the relationship between masculinity and violence. This is the use in both sequences of an obvious framing or mediating device. The intertextual playfulness and fast-paced parody of the generic filmic conventions of the first brawl scene are placed in striking contrast to the following sequence, which details the civil aftermath of the showdown, and where the madly alternating registers merge into the replicated seriousness of a news report. After the gas station is shown erupting into flames, there is a change to the grainy film stock associated with the news and documentary film-making, and the film switches back and forth between the two stocks throughout this sequence. As Benvolio climbs over grid-locked cars in an attempt to escape the pursuing Tybalt, a series of shots features the police response to the disturbance: young men lie face down on the footpath, their hands handcuffed behind their backs, and a veritable swarm of police helicopters converges on the scene, armed officers positioned to shoot down anyone implicated in the violence. A bird's-eye-view shot reveals abandoned cars in the streets of Verona as terrified citizens flee in panic. All of these images could have come from any news report detailing urban disturbance and violence in the late twentieth century, as the use of the grainy film-stock emphasises: indeed, Capulet, watching television in his office, learns of the brawl from a breaking news story. It is one of the many ways in which, as Loehlin observes, 'William Shakespeare's Romeo

+ Juliet foregrounds its own status as a mediated representation' (Burnett and Wray, 123).

The use of the proscenium arch in the second brawl sequence serves a similar function. Just as the switch to grainy film stock in the first brawl scene operates as a device which represents the mediated nature of this and all narratives, so the proscenium arch similarly re-invests this sequence with another layer of symbolic mediation. Holderness observes that

[t]he film camera ... can, like the proscenium arch, efface itself in a privileging of its object, constituting reality as objective in the illusionistic manner of naturalism; or it can, by violating those naturalist conventions, by emphasising and exploiting its mobility, call the spectator's attention to the mechanisms of its own perception.

(Shaughnessy, 75)

In the case of William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, the television camera in the first brawl scene and the proscenium arch in the second brawl sequence serve both a naturalist and an anti-illusionist function: the switches between film stocks in the first sequence and the mobility of the characters on either side of the proscenium in the second both refer to the naturalist conventions of film and theatre and show how those conventions may be violated. But more importantly, they are present to emphasise the very notion of the medium or the mediated representation. There are points in this film where, as Holderness puts it, the camera seeks to efface its presence, and others where it deliberately disrupts the illusion of filmic naturalism, but the use of the grainy film stock and the presence of the proscenium arch are both symbols of the power of film, of television, of the theatre, and of other media to control representation. The narrative is finally subsumed by the documentary news genre, as

the final scene of the film reverts to the grainy film-stock to show the bodies of Romeo and Juliet being removed from the church, although, as discussed above, the framing metaphor of the television is itself enclosed by the frame of the film. This emphasis on the mediated text is another acknowledgment of the ability of the film's intended audience to move between genres, styles, and techniques of media representation.

Luhrmann appropriates not only visual codes and practices of popular filmic genres, but the visual codes and practices associated with certain youth subcultures, which have been understood in cultural studies in terms of the notion of subcultural style, as developed by Dick Hebdige. The references to style in the film function as a kind of subcultural capital, which, as Sarah Thornton explains, 'can be *objectified* or *embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home, so subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and carefully assembled record collections' (Gelder and Thornton, 202-3). An important example of Luhrmann's deployment of style as a form of subcultural capital is his depiction of the warring Montague and Capulet gangs. Both groups in Luhrmann's film are defined by their style, which is expressed by their clothing and haircuts, their cars, their weapons, and even their deportment and gestures.

Ken Gelder gives the following account of style:

Style, as it is manifested through dress, look, sound, performance, and so on, is a powerful means of giving a group validation and coherence It allows a group to recognize itself and to be recognized (although not necessarily 'understood') by others; it makes a 'statement' which can be sent across the group as well as directed beyond it. Indeed, subcultural style is always relational

in this sense, measuring itself not only against internal distinctions but also against much wider contexts'

(Gelder and Thornton, 373)

This is precisely the use to which Luhrmann puts the notions of subcultural style and display in William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: the gangs of the Montagues and the Capulets are defined in relational terms, and their separate styles function to differentiate them from each other in their own eyes and in the eyes of those outside the groups. Thornton argues that '[s]ubcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder' (Gelder and Thornton, 202), and the styles of the Montague and Capulet gangs serve not only to differentiate, but to confer status, even to glorify. Moreover, Dick Hebdige's definition of style as 'intentional communication' posits the notion of display: '[style] stands apart – a visible construction, a loaded choice. It directs attention to itself; it gives itself to be read' (Gelder and Thornton, 134).

Display is central to Luhrmann's use of subcultural style in his portrayal of the Montague and Capulet gangs, as the first brawl sequence, discussed above, demonstrates. The sequence, which opens the main narrative of the film, begins with a shot of the 'Montague boys' out cruising in their car, a bright yellow convertible sports utility of the model favoured by surfer types. If the car itself weren't enough to draw attention to them, their brightly coloured Hawaiian shirts, unbuttoned and flapping in the wind, and their reckless disregard for road safety as they stand on their seats, singing along with the grunge rock blaring on the stereo and making crude gestures, are all calculated to serve as 'intentional communication'. These are 'da boys', teaming elements of surfer cool with pseudo-militaristic buzz cuts and dog tags. The look is rough, rebellious, and macho, but it is precisely that: a look. When

they encounter a group of Capulets, driving a customised American muscle car, at the gas station, the Montagues cower in the face of the almost tangible sense of power which emanates from their rivals.

Where the Montagues are characterised by short hairstyles and unbuttoned Hawaiian shirts, the Capulets' look is much more elegant. With immaculately groomed hair and goatees, they dress predominantly in black, and their tightly-fitted clothing is well tailored and cut to flatter. Their black leather boots feature moulded silver heels (Tybalt's have cats on them), and recall the spurred boot of the Western, to whose formal codes of violence the Capulets adhere. Tybalt's waistcoat features an image of the sacred heart in gloriously bright primary colours, and the weapons of the Capulets similarly bear images drawn from Roman Catholic iconography. Where the style of the Anglo-American Montagues evokes the army, that of the Latino Capulets evokes the Church: this is the 1990s equivalent of household livery.

The deportment and gestures of the Capulets are, like their clothing, highly stylised: their movements are slow, deliberate, and measured, and Tybalt turns lighting a cigar into a performance. Harris describes the choreography of the fight in this scene almost as a dance which 'show[s] the absolute dedication that Tybalt gives to these male displays, and the perfection with which he executes each move in the infliction of grievous bodily harm upon his rivals' (194); the movements of the Montagues are, by contrast, rough, disorganised, and, when Sampson licks his own nipple to titillate the carload of convent girls, obscene.

As John Clarke, Sturt Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts argue,

things simply appropriated and worn (or listened to) do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylisation – the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organised group-identity in the form and shape of a coherent and distinctive way of ‘being-in-the-world’.

(Gelder and Thornton, 108)

Luhmann uses subcultural style in this way to depict the Montague and Capulet gangs: style is not simply clothing, hairstyles, and cars, but functions as an expression of the organisation of those groups, and the ways in which they address the problems of the world in which they find themselves. As I discussed above, these groups must come to grips with a world that defines masculinity in terms of violence, and the styles and rituals of display of the Montague and Capulet gangs signal the attempts of each to negotiate that relationship. For the Montagues, masculinity manifests as a rebellious, disorganised kind of violence, whereas for the Capulets violence is a highly stylised, divinely sanctioned expression of masculinity.

The differences in style between the Montagues and the Capulets are, as I noted above, ethnicised, and Mercutio is also implicated in this ethnicised system of representation: he is differentiated from both groups, set up as Other, by being African American. He also draws on his own codes of style, and he is particularly characterised by his cross-dressed disco performance at the Capulet ball. Where his ethnicity sets him apart from both Montagues and Capulets, despite his fraternisation with Romeo and the Montague boys, his association with the visual codes of disco and glam transvestism sets him apart from the heterosexual system which is fundamental to the dynastic society in which the story takes place. The obscene gestures which constitute the Montague boys’ response to meeting a carload of virginal convent girls are symptomatic of the anxiety surrounding the integration into

the masculine world of violence and the heterosexual relationships that will allow for the perpetuation of that dynastic world. The use of the subcultural style of the transvestite disco diva, in Mercutio's performance of 'Young Hearts Run Free' at the Capulet ball, flamboyantly invokes a style system that is outside of the two competing codes of white masculinity (and masculine violence) on display among the Montagues and the Capulets, and thus locates him outside the heterosexual system of corporate finance and gang violence which is the Montague-Capulet rivalry.⁸

Gelder argues that, '[i]n many cases, style may be a subculture's most readable feature. It says something *about* that subculture – although what it says exactly may or may not be clear' (Gelder and Thornton, 374). Luhmann utilises the notions of style, display, and subcultural capital as a way of constructing the system of differentiation which identifies the Montagues, the Capulets, and Mercutio in terms which a young popular audience can identify and interpret. More importantly, the system of differentiation set up by the deployment of subcultural references functions to comment on the nature of the feud itself, and the ideas about masculinity, violence, and sexuality which are implicit in the structure of the feud and perpetuated by it.

Holderness argues that

Verona ... is one of Shakespeare's images of bourgeois society. The constitutive structure of that society is the great competitive rivalry between the houses of Capulet and Montague; its dominant value that transformation of all human purposes and activities into objects, which Marx defined as the central principle of bourgeois culture: the tendency for all things and human relationships to become objectified ('reification') as a consequence of the commodity production endemic to the bourgeois economy. Love between a

Capulet and a Montague signifies the precise antithesis to this feud, a symbolic gesture of concord and mutual affection with power to negate the antagonisms and contradictions of dynastic struggle and commercial rivalry The close of the play sees the lovers finally transformed into reified aesthetic objects.

(Holderness, xii-xiii)

This trend of reification that Holderness identifies in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is also the project of Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, but where the lovers are transformed into golden statues symbolising love, fidelity, and forgiveness at the end of Shakespeare's play, the use of the framing device of the television news report in Luhrmann's film transforms them into mediated filmic images: as Loehlin argues, '[t]he deaths of Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet bring no resolution; they become merely another lurid image for a media-besotted culture' (Burnett and Wray, 130).

Loehlin concludes by observing that the Romeo and Juliet characters in Rebel Without a Cause, West Side Story, and Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet 'are ahead of their time; their love points the way to a better future, a new unity beyond the greed, anger and factionalism of their parents' world' (Burnett and Wray, 129). But, just as 'the Western is always an elegy for something dead before we began' (Mitchell, 259), so Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet, as Loehlin puts it, 'live after their time' (Burnett and Wray, 129), as the costumes they wear to the ball where they meet suggest: 'Romeo is a Knight, Juliet a "bright angel" (II, ii, 26), a pure, untainted couple in the tradition of courtly love in a world and time far removed from the tarnished present' (Harris, 205). Luhrmann would like to preserve Romeo and Juliet in this moment, frozen in the silence and purity of the underwater kiss upon which the camera pauses following the suicides of the lovers, but Western society will not allow it, and Romeo and Juliet are turned over to the media. While Luhrmann insists that he intended his

film only to 'tell the story' of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, the story that William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet really tells is that of Shakespeare's mediated filmic representation in twentieth-century and turn of the millennium Western culture. Telling this story has also been the project of this thesis. Thanks for watching.

¹ While the words 'take their life' function in Shakespeare's text as a kind of proleptic irony, Luhrmann's emphasis on the decontextualised phrase does tend to overstate the case.

² See Diana R. Harris's 'A Consideration of the Soundtrack in Screen Adaptations of Shakespeare' (Unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Auckland, 2000), for a sophisticated and insightful account of the use of water imagery in Luhrmann's film.

³ In the interests of brevity I do not propose to discuss in any detail the relationship between the films of Zeffirelli and Luhrmann, but Harris (see n.2) provides an excellent account of the indebtedness of the later film to its predecessor.

⁴ By contrast, another film which draws on the Romeo and Juliet narrative, Shakespeare in Love, ignores the youth cultural emphasis of Romeo and Juliet's afterlife, focussing instead upon the play as a text on to which the psychoanalytic narrative of desire has been projected.

⁵ Luhrmann's screenplay divides up 3.1, placing Juliet's speech from the beginning of 3.2 between Mercutio's death and Romeo's retaliatory slaying of Tybalt, but, for the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to both filmic episodes as the second brawl sequence.

⁶ I am grateful to Peter McLaren for pointing out to me all the Western overtones in this sequence.

⁷ Harris further observes that

[t]he Western iconography will be most vividly drawn on when Romeo is in 'Mantua', a desolate caravan park in the desert. Wide open spaces, dry and dusty heat, the pitiless sun obscured in the haze – the landscape of the lone cowboy figure fighting his destiny with a sense of love already lost, of sunset and his last ride already upon him There is a wretched grandeur in this scene that plays homage to the best old Westerns, and what has been transmuted into filmic myths of the continuing quest for one version of male identity.

(199)

While I agree with Harris's account of the visual imagery of the Mantua sequence, I am inclined to think the use of the codes of the Western are most important when drawn on and violated in the scene preceding the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt.

⁸ See Sarah Thornton's 'Strategies for Reconstructing the Popular Past' (Popular Music [1990] Volume 9/1, 87-95) and Gregory W. Bredbeck's 'Troping the Light Fantastic: Representing Disco Then and Now' (GLQ, Vol.3 [1996], 71-107) for discussion on the links between black (gay) subcultures and disco.

Conclusion

The Shakespearean Lens

Theatrical, film, and television productions have always been accorded a place and a potential value within the broad conspectus of a literary education: the question is what place, and what value? ... Traditional 'literature' must keep them peripheral, since when they become a central focus they tend to displace the text from its central role in constituting the nature of the subject; tend to render the discipline itself unstable, open to question, vulnerable to change.

(Graham Holderness, in Shaughnessy, 72)

Nobody can raise anybody else's cultural standard. The most that can be done is to transmit the skills, which are not personal but general human property, and at the same time to give open access to all that has been made and done.

(Raymond Williams 1967, 318-19)

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to outline a broad project in which Shakespeare on film may be deployed in the service of various educational agendas: the New Zealand secondary-level English curriculum, as outlined in English in the New Zealand Curriculum; the long tradition of the study of the works of Shakespeare in this country and throughout the world; and the diverse and ever-expanding field of literary and critical theory. My goal at all times has been two-fold: to suggest alternatives to what David Margolies calls the 'traditional character-imagery-plot' model of teaching and studying Shakespeare, and to propose Shakespearean film as a

user-friendly tool for the introduction and implementation in the secondary classroom of critical theory.

I began with a consideration of the curricular context for Shakespeare in New Zealand. In Chapter One, I was concerned with the objectives of English in the New Zealand Curriculum, particularly those pertaining to the tripartite structure of the language strands, as well as with that document's position concerning the function and interpretation of text, especially the 'literary' text. I discussed the history and development of English in the New Zealand Curriculum and its relationship to the senior examination system in order to gain a sense of what has come to constitute the predominant figuration of the study and examination of the works of Shakespeare at an institutional level. A close reading of the pattern of questions in the Shakespeare section of the University Entrance and Bursaries examination from throughout the past decade, carried out in the context of an awareness of the hegemonic deployment of Shakespeare within the emerging education system of a developing British colony, revealed the persistence of an essentially reactionary model of reading Shakespeare. Like Margolies, I found that a teaching strategy based around character, plot, theme, and imagery, and characterised by a pervasive belief in the plays' embodiment of universal human nature, predominated, and moreover that such an approach

is reactionary in more than a technical way: denying social context, denying contradiction and denying the multiplicity of ways the drama, even in reading, has of creating meaning and significance, it allows only those interpretations naturalised in a ruling-class perspective and thereby helps preserve the status quo.

(Holderness, 52)

Despite this, my examination of English in the New Zealand Curriculum found buried within a document which is vague, overly generalised, and at times contradictory, a series of concepts and strategies which are promising, ground-breaking, even radical, and which have the potential to revolutionise the study and teaching of the works of Shakespeare and indeed any text.

The most obvious and significant of these radical strategies is the structure of the curriculum around the three language strands. Chapter Two, then, was dedicated to the task of starting to uncover the potential for reading texts in terms of the function and interaction of written language, oral language, and visual language, for which Shakespearean film provided fruitful examples. This chapter also demonstrated that an analysis focused on the language strands functioned to initiate the student into the study of Shakespeare from the perspective not only of language comprehension, but also in terms of imagery, theme, and cultural context. In Chapter Three I concentrated on the visual language strand, which is the least developed of the three, in order to suggest some techniques for using Shakespearean film to analyse the interaction of verbal and visual language in the construction of meaning. I was also concerned, moreover, to point to ways in which visual language could be analysed independently of the connection with verbal language on which English in the New Zealand Curriculum insists. The skills involved in the analysis of written, oral, and visual language equip the student to make meaning in the process of reading a text, whereas an approach dedicated to the identification of certain themes, modes of characterisation, or strains of imagery much more readily allows for the transmission of a fixed or dominant set of beliefs about the Shakespearean text which Margolies calls the 'status quo'. The key word in my account of character- and theme-based

teaching here is ‘identification’: I acknowledge, of course, that this kind of teaching may be done in a productive and radical way, and I mean only to criticise the school of instruction that relies on certain themes and modes of characterisation being present in the works as essential features, and which requires students to identify those features in order for their reading to be ‘correct’.

In the later chapters of this thesis, I sought to demonstrate how the skills involved in reading verbal and visual language could be activated in the service of a film-based application of certain theoretical approaches to the plays of Shakespeare. Chapter Four took as its point of departure the question of ‘responding to text’, which English in the New Zealand Curriculum uncharacteristically discusses at some length (although that discussion is largely disorganised and undertheorised), and to which the University Entrance and Bursaries examination devotes an entire section. This seemed not only to invite but to demand a consideration of the principles of reader-response criticism (which itself was surely the origin of the curriculum’s emphasis on response), so this part of my discussion focused on three filmic versions of Hamlet, describing various aspects of the film-makers’ adaptations in terms of different incarnations of reader-response, not as a way of positing the kinds of responses a student reader of Hamlet might produce, but to model some of the factors involved in response, by discussing the film-makers as reader-responders.

Chapter Five was concerned with questions of feminism and gender, using the filmic portrayal of Gertrude and Ophelia in three films of Hamlet to demonstrate the potential application of different forms of feminist criticism to the works of Shakespeare. It was also my goal in this chapter to use the changing depictions of

Gertrude and Ophelia in a series of films from the past fifty years to introduce an understanding of the development of feminist and gender studies, from the second wave feminism which influenced Shakespearean criticism in the 1970s and 1980s to the materialist feminist practice of critics like Dymphna Callaghan working in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century.

The final two chapters of the thesis were dedicated to the introduction of the concerns and methodology of cultural studies. In Chapter Six I gave an account of theories of élite and popular culture as means of understanding the way in which the works of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare himself as historical figure and cultural icon, have achieved and maintained a particular kind of cultural significance in Western society. Such an understanding is crucial to avoiding a Shakespeare programme that, as Margolies states, permits ‘only those interpretations naturalised in a ruling-class perspective’, since Shakespeare’s deployment in education has traditionally operated from the position of an unquestioned belief in the literary and cultural superiority of the plays, and for which the name ‘Shakespeare’ has become a byword. In this chapter I discussed two films, Shakespeare in Love and Michael Hoffman’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, both of which reveal a conscious agenda to negotiate the figuration of Shakespeare in relation to élite and popular culture. In Chapter Seven I analysed Baz Luhrmann’s William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet, taking up the cultural studies critique of the Adornian theory of the culture industry by examining the ways in which Luhrmann appropriates the visual vocabulary of popular films and youth subcultures in order to tailor Shakespeare’s text for a youth audience.

In sum, my goal has been to answer, with specific reference to the Shakespearean film, the question posed by Holderness in the headnote to this conclusion: what place and what value should be afforded these productions within a literary education? It will be clear from the preceding chapters that I believe that film and televisual productions should have a central place in English programmes, and that a film-based study of Shakespeare may accompany or even replace more traditional modes of study. Shakespearean filmic texts are valuable, then, for the different modes of analysis of the Shakespearean text that they permit and encourage, whether these analytic modes involve the close reading of oral and visual language and their relationship to written language, as outlined in Chapters Two and Three, or the application of different kinds of literary and cultural theory, such as those discussed on Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven. This approach to the study and teaching of the works of Shakespeare conforms to the model posited by Raymond Williams, being predicated not on a belief in the intrinsic value of the Shakespearean text, access to which has been regarded as a means of raising the 'cultural standard' of the reader, but on a programme based on the transmission of skills, whether those involved with the analysis of written, oral and visual language, or with the application of different modes of theoretical analysis. Finally, the arguments outlined in the preceding chapters have sought to render the study of the works of Shakespeare within the discipline of English 'unstable, open to question, vulnerable to change', in order that those texts may continue to serve to further our understanding of the construction and transmission of meaning as we look through the Shakespearean lens.

Appendix

Summary Report on Teacher Interviews

(As part of the teacher interview stage of my research, I spoke to fifteen teachers from nine schools, including one teacher on exchange from Ontario, Canada. These schools included one private girls' school, two public boys' schools, one co-ed private school, one area school, and four co-ed public schools. All but two of these schools were in Christchurch. While the data summarised below was not directly utilised in the preceding analyses, the interviews provided invaluable insight into the current methods and practices of teachers of Shakespeare in New Zealand schools. The candid and detailed responses that I received from the teachers interviewed greatly enhanced my understanding of the pedagogical issues with which this thesis is largely concerned, and their enormous enthusiasm for the project of teaching Shakespeare was a great inspiration to me).

In most cases, I began the interview by asking teachers about the philosophy behind their own, personal approach to Shakespeare teaching, and what their objectives were in teaching a Shakespeare play to a class. All the teachers I spoke to were themselves passionate and excited about Shakespeare, and, almost without exception, a desire to convey this to students was apparent in their responses. Related to this was a necessity to get past the linguistic and cultural barriers with which many students associate the study of Shakespeare, and to show students that Shakespeare was accessible to them. Several talked about exposing students to 'absolute excellence' in literature; one teacher likes to tell his students that, while they may not have the best of many things in life, they can, by reading Shakespeare, at least enjoy the world's best literature!

More specifically, most teachers referred to the cultural importance of Shakespeare, particularly in terms of things like the ideas that Shakespeare develops, the power of those ideas, and their perceived universality and enduring relevance; one teacher wanted his students to recognise that they were ‘inheritors of old world culture’, and another wanted to convey that Shakespeare was ‘a person with a deep and relevant understanding of people and what makes us tick.’ Shakespeare’s endurance as entertainment was also noted several times, and one teacher felt that giving students access to an enjoyment of Shakespeare’s stories was one of his primary objectives.

Although two or three teachers mentioned Shakespeare’s linguistic importance, in terms of his contribution to the development of the language, only four referred specifically to Shakespeare’s use of language as an area which they felt was centrally important to their teaching objectives. One teacher said engagement with the language on the part of the students was first and foremost among his objectives, because ‘the actual process of decoding the Shakespeare text is a good language activity, meaning it forces the student to think about alternate ways of saying the same thing.’ Another talked about wanting his students to discover ‘the joy of metaphor’ and to become sensitive to the texture of Shakespeare’s language, and a third wanted her students to see how the use of language can create meaning, and that language is complex. Only one teacher talked about examining Shakespeare’s language use in the context of general language use and the Exploring Language component of the English in the New Zealand Curriculum.

Related to the question of teachers' objectives was that of the Bursary prescription, and the extent to which it influenced Shakespeare teaching at Bursary level, but also, by implication, at other levels as well. This question was answered partly in that only five teachers made any specific reference to the Bursary prescription and the pattern of questions on the Bursary paper in the course of the interview. One teacher observed that 'the bottom line is delivering what the kids actually need to be able to do for the Bursary exam; that's the end product. But how we get there; there's a fair lot of enjoyment for us ... as teachers.' Another made a similar comment: 'At Bursary, you really have to analyse the kinds of Bursary questions and pitch the way you teach it that will fit into the questions. But at the same time I'd like to let them have some fun.' A third teacher noted that 'the questions that [university lecturers] produce determine the way you're going to teach it'. Only two of the teachers interviewed referred to the Bursary curriculum as a significantly negative influence. One said she felt 'hamstrung' by the necessity for students to be able to write essays on Shakespeare, while another said that the demands of the curriculum did not allow sufficient time to really examine Shakespeare's language, which she held to be one of the most important aspects of her Shakespeare teaching.

Another question I put to teachers was what they felt the role of Shakespeare in the context of the broader English Curriculum to be, and whether or not Shakespeare should continue to be compulsory at Bursary level. The only teacher who said he felt Shakespeare should not be compulsory, and that the choice of whether or not to teach the plays should be left up to the individual teacher, was the sole teacher of Bursary English at an area school. He had only five students in his Bursary class in 1998. However, this teacher said he would continue to teach Shakespeare even if it were not

compulsory. Another teacher said he thought no texts should really be compulsory, but still felt it was important that every student come out of secondary school 'knowing about Shakespeare and having had a taste'. All the other teachers interviewed were in favour of compulsory Shakespeare at Bursary level, and the teachers from one department were in favour of compulsory Shakespeare at 6th form as well. Another teacher said he would like to see something written into the curriculum which would make compulsory what he called 'an element of something Shakespearionic' at lower levels, in order to prevent students arriving at Bursary without having studied any Shakespeare whatsoever.

Only a few teachers talked about Shakespeare's place in the curriculum other than re-iterating their points about Shakespeare's universality, enduring relevance, and cultural and linguistic significance. A couple of teachers mentioned Shakespeare in terms of English in the New Zealand Curriculum's Written Language Achievement Objectives, which state under Reading Functions that students should read 'a wide range of contemporary and historical texts' (Ministry of Education 1994, 34). Other aspects of the curriculum referred to by teachers included close reading, which is one of the Reading Functions, and the Reading and Writing Processes of Exploring Language and Thinking Critically. Two teachers mentioned that Shakespeare allows them to bring in the visual language strand of the curriculum by using film. One teacher even commented that the study of Shakespeare 'addresses issues that affect the whole of the English curriculum'. Many teachers also observed that Shakespeare can be used at all levels at secondary school, and one teacher said he felt it did not need to exclude more limited students.

I asked teachers to describe for me the methodology they would follow when approaching a Shakespeare play in the classroom. Not surprisingly, this varied from teacher to teacher, and depended in each case on the level and ability of the class. However, some general trends could be noted. Many teachers start by giving the class a narrative summary of the play, and then proceed by reading the play and viewing a film in segments. A couple of teachers confessed to relying primarily on film, and privileged watching Shakespeare over reading him. Only one teacher preferred to leave the film until the very end of the unit. Some teachers mentioned using audio tapes of the plays, which the students would listen to while following along in their texts. Only three teachers described using drama in any central way, all of whom were clearly devoted to drama both as a means of teaching Shakespeare, and as a subject in its own right. Several other teachers felt that drama was not really a means to students' success, but only one was brave enough to confess that this was because he felt inadequate when it came to doing drama activities with his class. Very few teachers felt having students read through the play in class was a useful way of proceeding.

Other activities common to many teachers' methodologies included brain-storming about Shakespeare and his life, talking about language and language change, teaching aspects of verse structure and Elizabethan language, describing Shakespeare's society and theatre (sometimes students would do a research assignment on some aspect of Shakespeare's world), working closely with short passages of text, and doing a comparative study of two films of the same play. Some teachers had students do various production activities based on the Shakespeare text, such as writing performance notes for a speech, designing a programme for a theatrical production of

the play, or preparing a storyboard for a passage from the play. Only one teacher described using critical texts as part of his teaching: for many, film was the primary resource besides the text. A wide variety of editions of the plays were used, and a few teachers swore by editions which included a contemporary paraphrase of the text on the facing page, while others preferred their students to do the work of 'translation' themselves. A few teachers also mentioned using the comic strip editions of the plays. In discussion of the play and working with the text, teachers tended to focus on theme, character and motive, setting, and structure. Only two mentioned specifically talking about imagery, and the use of language to construct images.

I asked teachers what they felt the greatest difficulties were for their students in coming to a Shakespeare play. Almost all mentioned Shakespeare's language as posing the greatest problems for students. One said that students find the language intimidating because they don't understand how it is working, presumably in terms of syntax and vocabulary as well as the use of figurative language. Another felt that her students found the language alienating, and said that they got frustrated that Shakespeare did not just say what he meant and use straightforward language. A third felt that the aspect of the language students often found difficult was the use of word play and the play of concepts through the language. However, a few teachers noted that they felt students expected to find the language difficult, but, as one teacher put it, 'I think it is imaginary rather than real, at times'. Another teacher said: 'I've found that the strongest thing that influences what you teach kids is the expectations that are already in place in their minds. And sometimes they can be a real block'. Another expectation that students often bring to Shakespeare is that he will be boring, but, as one teacher observed, the anticipation of boredom is often closely related to a concern

about comprehension, and she tells her students that, if they're finding Shakespeare boring, that probably means they are finding him difficult. A couple of teachers said that they felt that the prejudices students often held about Shakespeare seemed to have been breaking down in the past few years, and thought it might have something to do with the influence of recent popular films.

In order to deal with students' perceived difficulty with understanding Shakespeare, the teachers I spoke to had developed a number of strategies. Some teachers found working orally with the text the most successful means of making the language come alive and make sense. One would read most of the play to his class, putting on voices and adding gestures to make it engaging and interesting. Another, when teaching Othello, would read the part of Iago, while students took the other parts. One teacher told her class that the words were easier to understand when you said them out loud, and another felt that having students act out scenes was the best way to help them understand the language: 'You have to be saying something to say something'. This teacher also noted that students developed a much better understanding of the rhythm and phrasing of the language when they were acting it, although several teachers felt the opposite was true, and that students had so little idea about those aspects of the language that acting out was not a helpful exercise. Another strategy for dealing with language issues mentioned by teachers was the use of activities involving Shakespearean curses, insults, and rhymes. This served as an introduction to the language in terms of vocabulary, as well as getting students interested in and comfortable with using the language.

Teachers also noted the importance of film in overcoming language difficulties, but opinion seemed to be divided over whether or not watching a film was a direct aid to language comprehension. Several teachers stressed the importance of film for more limited students, in terms of providing a point of entry into the world and the language of the play, but it could probably be said that film served as an entry point rather than a means of understanding for students of all ability levels. One teacher felt that students had so much difficulty with the language that the only way to approach a play was to have the students watch a film of it first, although he did say that students still struggled with reading even after seeing a film, and often would not even recognise names of characters when they saw them on the page. Another teacher made a similar observation with specific reference to Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, commenting that, although he was initially very excited by the prospect of using that film as a teaching resource, he found that, for all that they had enjoyed it, students had not really understood much of the language. A third teacher felt her class would not have understood what was going on in Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing had she not stopped the film from time to time to explain.

One teacher believed that what he called the 'cognitive visual construct' was not strong in the modern reader, and therefore, students had trouble projecting language into the imaginative realm and were often unable to grasp the visual dimension of Shakespeare's language. In this instance, film is not useful, in that it provides the visual material that Shakespeare's language is working to create, and indeed, this teacher felt that it was because students were so used to this kind of visual culture that they had lost the ability to appreciate the visually evocative elements of language.

Another difficulty mentioned by one teacher was that of cultural distance. He felt that students from a post-Christian era had trouble understanding the overt and buried references to Christianity in Shakespeare's work, and noted that issues of gender and race similarly required a lot of explanation. However, this teacher did feel that exploring those cultural issues was all part of the richness of studying a Shakespeare play, and other teachers noted that students tend to be very interested in learning about Shakespeare's world. The fact that many schools include a research assignment based on some aspect of Elizabethan society may explain why this was not noted as a difficulty by more teachers.

Although I planned to put separate questions to teachers about Shakespeare on film, much information regarding their use of film came out in their answers to questions about their methodology and the difficulties they and their students encountered, which indicated the extent to which film has become an integral part of Shakespeare teaching. Only one teacher expressed any real reservations about using film as part of a study of Shakespeare: she felt that film provided everything 'in a nutshell' and did not leave much room for students to 'move around in their own heads'. She also felt that there was a great deal of what she referred to as 'distortion' in film in terms of cutting and re-ordering the text, but also at the level of the director's interpretation of the play. She preferred to leave the film until the very end of a unit, so that students would bring the best possible knowledge of the play to a viewing of the film, and so that they could compare their own vision of the play with a director's. Another teacher betrayed a real anxiety about teaching film in general, and about teaching Shakespearean film as film rather than Shakespeare in performance.

In almost all cases, teachers referred to using film as an adjunct to teaching the play, and, while many teachers expressed an interest in doing film studies of Shakespeare films, only one school included a Shakespeare film study as part of a course; in this case, the course was the non-academic sixth form (Year 12) programme, and a film study was included rather than a textual study of Shakespeare because it was felt the students would not have been able to cope with reading the play. Often, teachers would use two films of a play to do a comparative study, but the comparison tended to be in terms of the different directors' interpretations of the play, rather than at a primarily filmic level. A couple of teachers had showed extracts of various Shakespeare films, either to introduce several plays, or to spark students' interest by showing exciting scenes like the duel sequence from Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet. Only one teacher had ever shown films of plays he was not teaching as a way of introducing students to Shakespeare.

Film was used in a number of ways and for a number of reasons by the teachers I spoke to. Some liked to use film primarily because it gave students an overview of the plot, and provided a structure on which students could hang new information and knowledge about the play. One teacher felt that wheeling a television into the classroom was still the chief method by which to get a class's attention, while another said that showing the film was an important part of convincing the students that Shakespeare was worth studying. Several teachers noted that Shakespeare films, especially the most recent productions, and even bad ones, have made Shakespeare accessible (one of them referred to the recent outpouring of popular films as 'the Branagh revolution'). Film was seen as a significant means by which students received visual representation of the play: one teacher said that film re-invested

Shakespeare in its proper context, while another thought that film helped students see the play as ‘something living’.

One teacher commented that Luhrmann’s William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet could be used to trigger discussion about the hazards of drugs, while another described an hour long debate she had with her (predominantly male) class over the physical violence of Claudio and Leonato towards Hero in Branagh’s Much Ado About Nothing, which had earned cheering from the students. This led to a wider discussion about male violence against women in films, and the teacher brought in the example of Once Were Warriors, which they had watched earlier in the year without any cheering.

Something I was particularly interested in was whether or not teachers thought that students were audio-visually skilled, and what kind of an influence their extra-curricular viewing had on their ability to read visual texts. Many teachers noted that students had trouble differentiating between the film text and the play text, and that this could cause problems in their written work; one teacher who had marked Bursary in the past said he could identify students who had either watched the film instead of reading the play or who had confused the two. One group of teachers also felt that students did not necessarily understand the difference between stage and screen. Several teachers felt that their students were quite unsophisticated viewers, while others felt that students had a familiarity with audio-visual language, but needed to be given a vocabulary with which to express that knowledge. Teachers felt that students were more able to recognise filmic conventions than literary ones, and that they were more able to discuss visual texts than literary texts. One teacher said that he thought

the viewing that students did outside the classroom predisposed them to like a particular kind of film, while another felt that the quantity of viewing in which students indulged did not encourage critical awareness and active viewing.

It seemed to be a general trend that teachers used the most recent films of the play they were teaching, and resorted to the BBC television films where no other version was available or in existence. In cases where two relatively recent film versions of the play were available, teachers would often use two films comparatively. The Zeffirelli and Luhrmann films of Romeo and Juliet were often used side by side (and, interestingly, preference was often divided among students), as were the Zeffirelli and Branagh films of Hamlet. The Polanski Macbeth is still much used by teachers and enjoyed by students, although one teacher preferred to use the BBC version because she thought the Polanski was too 'filmic'. Othello is very widely taught at Bursary level, and, while most teachers used Oliver Parker's recent film, some still preferred the BBC version with Anthony Hopkins and Bob Hoskins. Kenneth Branagh's Much Ado About Nothing and Trevor Nunn's Twelfth Night were also mentioned, but as a rule the comedies are taught much less frequently than the tragedies. A couple of teachers expressed an interest in using Ian McKellen and Richard Loncraine's adaptation of Richard III, but more as a film study than as an adjunct to teaching the play.

While several teachers mentioned taking students to see the plays in the theatre as the ideal, some very interesting comments were made about students and play-going. Most teachers noted that hardly any of their students would have seen much, if any live theatre before. One teacher felt that students did not know what it was to be an

audience to a live performance. Another described taking her class to see Wai Ora, which they found very powerful, and a third said that he thought students were uncomfortable with live theatre: they often feel threatened, they get embarrassed during the love scenes, and their tolerance for violence is lower. One school had mounted a community production of Macbeth in 1991, which the English teacher I spoke to had directed, and he said students still remembered it and asked about it.

I was struck by how many teachers expressed a real love and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare. Several talked about how much they themselves learn every time they teach a play, and for this reason it was felt that Shakespeare's plays were excellent texts to teach year after year. One teacher described taking delight in exploding 'the Shakespeare myth' (although he didn't use the term in the same way as Graham Holderness et. al. do) and humanising Shakespeare for his students, while others talked of experiencing joy when their students start to understand and enjoy Shakespeare: one teacher finds it 'an extraordinarily rewarding teaching experience.'

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